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FEATURE DETECTIVE STORY

THE HOUSE on the ROCKS

By Jack Bechdolt

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The HOUSE on the ROCKS

by

JACK BECHDOLT

CHAPTER ONE

OUT OF THE NIGHT

A NORTHEASTER was sweeping the north shore, bringing with it driving cold rain and a mist that obscured everything. The sandy roads were full of puddles and pools and the big closed car which was rocking at a good forty miles an hour hit these with the effect of a speedboat driving into a head sea.

At each impact a shower of mud and water sluiced over the radiator and ran off the wind-shield. Except where an automatic wiper kept a small, clean circle for the driver's eyes to see through, vision was almost impossible.

Evening had drawn on and the car's powerful headlights blazed a weird illumination which suddenly picked up various commonplace objects and lent strange importance to them. A twisted, whiskery old willow tree would flash out of the night, waving wild arms; rocks would take weird sculptured forms; at times the lights would pick out a breaker in the moment that it curled over some point and it would rise like some white ghost against the blackness.

The road from the station at Squam to Folly Bay was full of sharp turns and none too wide. Only a person who knew it thoroughly would dare take it as such speed on such a night.

Cora Lane, who drove the big car, was familiar with every turn and twist, rut and puddle, since girlhood. Sheltered by glass and steel from the night, the young woman made a pretty, dainty picture in sharp contrast to the storm outside. She wore the light frock she had put on for tea that afternoon. Her brown hair was dressed in the mode and fluffed about her ears. The excitement of the drive gave a bright color to her cheeks. Altogether she looked much too dainty and fragile, too much the butterfly to master a plunging, roaring monster of high horsepower that rooted its steel snout through the waves of mud and rain and laughed at the elements.

Cora Lane's cousin, Joseph Canavan, who sat beside her in the big car, thought this as his admiring eyes watched her. But he noted the girl drove with speed but not recklessness, her eye was quick and her hand and brain quicker, and the small, rounded chin and lips, closed with determination, indicated character and courage.

Carnavan was a handsome fellow in white woolens, white shoes, white linen, hatless because of the summer season. He was brown and his regular features were handsome. He looked very much the picture of cool, studied enjoyment as he sat with legs luxuriously extended, moving easily to the rocking of the big car, his dark eyes enjoying his delightful cousin.

Unsheltered from the storm except by a capacious old overcoat of rather quaint pattern and the soft black felt hat drawn close over his eyes, there moved the third person in a drama that was rapidly nearing its first swift-moving act.

This man was probably past middle age. His hair was iron-gray with plentiful white streakings, and curled crisply. His broad face was wrinkled and the wrinkles seemed to concentrate in and radiate from small, lively dark eyes. There was something in his medium height, his carriage and movements as he plodded along the muddy road that suggested he belonged to an older and more picturesque generation, a day of crinolines and painted fans.

The man plodded without any lantern or flashlight to guide him. The sweep of the rain against him and the thickening mist made any vision difficult.

Without warning he stood in a blinding white glare that came from behind as the big closed car rocketed around a sharp turning.

The car seemed on his heels in the instant.

To Cora Lane, peering through the little clear circle of windshield, there came a second's vision of a plodding figure with bent head, a flash of the man leaping aside.

The girl acted instantaneously with that immediate co-ordination of eye, brain and muscle that marks the skilled driver.

The big car swerved aside.

Simultaneously the brakes set and the heavy cord tires ripped loose gravel with a sound like tearing cloth.

To the two startled occupants of the car there came a faint cry as they passed the spot of meeting, a cry of a man in pain.

The big car stopped finally. Cora Lane was on her feet and her hand met her cousin's over the handle of the door. She leaped to the road before him, regardless of drenching, yet she had found time to pick a pocket flash-lamp from its rack.

At the door of the car Joseph Carnavan hesitated long enough to reach for a coat which he threw across his shoulders and for a big cape which he hastily adjusted over the girl's shoulders as he ran behind her.

The flash-lamp in Cora's hand pointed its bright finger across the road and picked out a huddled form against the earth bank. The figure was stirring, sitting upright. The man's hat had fallen aside, fully revealing his lined, wrinkled face and the bushy iron-gray hair.

He greeted the light with a shaky nervousness: "Twisted my leg, I guess. I jumped without time to look where I was landing. I—I think—my ankle——"

Carnavan had his arm about the fallen man's shoulder and was helping him to his feet. He swayed uncertainly and leaned his weight heavily on the younger man.

Cora Lane caught his other arm. "Right in the car with him," she directed.

"Oh, I say, Cora. Maybe it's not so bad."

She cut her cousin short. "Into the car," she directed. "We can't stand in this downpour and get anything done!"

The three of them went slowly, the injured man in the middle, and climbed back into the warmth and dry comfort of the big car. They got their guest easy on a seat and examined his hurt. Apparently he had given his ankle a nasty twist.

Cora Lane spoke with decision: "You must come home with me and spend the night at Folly Bay. I insist! It's fifteen miles back to the village—and there isn't a place fit to stay in overnight. I can telephone from the house for a doctor."

"You are much too kind, young lady. Really, I——"

"Why, Cora, there is a sort of an inn," Carnavan protested. "I think they could take good care of this gentleman."

"He is coming with us!" Cora insisted. The way she said it settled the question finally. She added indignantly: "I had no

business driving so fast tonight. The accident is my fault. Do you think I'm afraid to take the responsibility?"

Carnavan colored and looked uneasy. "Of course, of course, if you want it that way," he agreed hastily. "I only thought perhaps the gentleman——"

"You are very kind," the hurt man agreed with a smile. "I would prefer a comfortable bed to one of the summer inn variety, I'll admit. And I think a good night's rest will fix me up."

Cora Lane promptly clinched her victory by starting the car. They proceeded at a moderate pace a distance of about three miles.

They came suddenly to an open headland. The road was hard, bare granite. The big seas booming on the rocks greeted them at either side and ahead.

Fantastic great boulders started out of obscurity under the headlights and finally the blinding green of wet shrubbery and the gray walls of a substantial old-fashioned stone dwelling that capped the outermost point of rock and rose challengingly against the fury of the wild Atlantic.

The car rolled sedately to the hospitable door of "Lane's Folly."

CHAPTER TWO

HELP WANTED.

IN the low-ceilinged library of "Lane's Folly," sheltered by its thick stone walls against the booming, driving storm outside, a twinkling wood fire warming him, his bandaged foot extended easily before him on a low stool, the uninvited guest sat alone for the moment.

During the past two hours he had been the object of many attentions. Cora Lane's aunt, Mrs. Sedgewick, a stout little lady with a wax-doll face preserved against line or wrinkle these many, many years by some sort of art of vanity she kept secret, had fussed and clucked and exclaimed about him, proffering unneeded shawls and smelling-salts and ice-packs. She even showed some determination to sit and read to the invalid, a determination which had taken all of her niece's will, backed by the doctor's orders, to shake.

The doctor had called, brought from the village by the Lanes own utility car. He had examined the ankle, pronounced the damage slight, though willing to admit it might be very painful, and had just taken his departure.

Joseph Carnavan had been duly solicitous and thoughtfully brought down a box of very excellent cigars which, with a cane to lean upon, stood convenient to the hurt man's hand at this moment.

And now dinner was expected in a short time. Annie, the cook and general maid, a middle-aged, florid woman, had announced its speedy advent. The others had gone to freshen themselves.

The stranger who had come so unexpectedly out of the night, an uninvited guest to a small family group, looked exceedingly comfortable and pleased with himself.

His little, twinkling eyes surveyed the old room with shrewd interest, making note of the shelves of worn, old books, the long table with its bright bouquet of fresh-picked nasturtiums in a bright brass bowl, the good old prints on the walls, the colonial mantel, the interesting low windows with their deep embrasures that told of the thickness of the stout stone walls. The age of the house was apparent in its proportions, its paneling, in everything, including its furniture, but it had all grown old gracefully. There was no decay, only a sound mellowness, enlightened now by touches of youth, such as the nasturtiums and a woman's beach parasol of Japanese design left, along with a bright scarf, in a corner. The uninvited guest noted all and approved of it.

The library door opened softly. Cora Lane peered in with a smile of apology and greeting. The guest nodded and she entered, closing the door behind her.

Like the others at Lane's Folly, Cora had instantly approved the man thrust so unexpectedly on her hospitality. He had proved himself of gentle breeding, possessed of an old-time courtesy and a self-posses-

sion that made him instantly at home. Now she eyed him with a sharp little pucker of question between her level brows. "You are comfortable, Professor Ford?" She stressed the name.

"Very comfortable. Won't you sit down beside me here?" The man lowered his voice as she joined him. "You are quite right, Miss Lane. Here are my credentials—your own telegram." He handed the girl a slip of yellow paper.

"Then you are Ford Markman, the detective! You——"

"For the present I am Professor Ford. Please remember. As I telegraphed you, I prefer to join your small party without arousing any suspicion. I think between us we managed my introduction to your home very well indeed."

"Then I didn't really hurt you? Oh, I am glad!"

"The hurt is a trifle," Ford Markman whispered. "Don't let it worry you a bit. Just enough of a bruise to satisfy the doctor, and most of that I made by hitting my ankle with a stone while you and your cousin were coming up."

Cora sighed with relief. "You see," she explained, "your wire said you would join us as if by accident. But I had no idea how. And I knew your train must have been in several hours when I started home. I hadn't seen you—didn't know where to expect you—and to tell the truth, I was feeling desperate. I did drive too fast—much too fast! I—I was thinking"—she clasped her hands in sudden agony—"if I had to spend another night in this house without help I thought I would go mad."

Ford Markman, the detective, summoned from New York by the girl's urgent telegram, laid his hand over hers. "You have help now," he whispered reassuringly. "Nothing is going to harm you! But I must know first the details of your trouble. Your telegram to me was rather sketchy."

"I'll tell you everything! Things have happened here, unaccountable things! And I feel that somehow the very place has a blight on it—almost as if the house had been cursed. Yes, even this place I have always thought of as home has taken a sinister aspect that frightens me!"

"Then tell me," Markman urged. "And by all means begin with your own history and the house. Let me hear everything."

Cora Lane stared at the fire, arranging the sequence of her narrative. A nervous shudder swept over her as she began to speak.

"This house was my father's and has been in the family since it was built. You know its local name, Lane's Folly? That name attached to the place because of its location on this headland in a day when families made their homesteads back in the sheltered fertile land where they could cultivate fields. My ancestor, Captain Seth Lane, who built this place, was not like them. He wanted the sea about him, and he had the money to buy what other men produced in their fields. So he built out here.

"The Lanes came to this Massachusetts coast with the early settlers in 1700. Seth Lane was the first to rise above the rank of a fisherman. The story is that when he was twenty-five Seth Lane quit his dory and lobster pots and went to sea as a common sailor out of Boston. He was gone two years. Where he went nobody ever found out. At the end of that time he reappeared, bought this land and built this house. Seth left his village as poor as any of the impoverished, hard-working boys he knew. After two years' absence he returned a rich man, who could buy land and build himself a big house. Nobody knew how this happened. Seth Lane never told. He cut himself off from his old acquaintances, took a courtesy title of captain and lived here like a country gentleman."

Ford Markman nodded. "Pirates' treasure! Looted merchantmen, the lawlessness of the Spanish Main, barratry, pillage, violence and sea-romance! Yes, I can imagine!"

Cora nodded. "There must have been something of truth in their gossip," she sighed. "There is only one memento of Seth Lane handed down in the family. It is this." She removed a silk cord from her neck and handed the detective the small

gold and inlay charm it bore. He examined it closely.

"Spanish workmanship," he agreed. "It must be very old and undoubtedly very valuable. A rare piece!"

"Seth Lane got it somewhere. Where, God only knows!" She regarded the bit of ancient jewelry with a look of distaste.

"In his seventieth year Seth Lane went mad," Cora continued. "His wife had died years before. His son lived here with him. The old man went raving man and the son built a strong room with a barred window in which his father was confined.

"The story is that Seth Lane had buried the money he had acquired in his two years' disappearance. Nobody but he knew where. The son, my own ancestor, hoped eventually to learn the hiding-place. Then the old man lost his reason. Remorse for his wild years at sea preyed on his mind, I don't doubt. The son kept him under strict care, hoping for the lucid moment when Seth Lane would tell his secret. The time never came. The old man died in his ninetieth year and left a considerable estate, including this house.

"Other generations of Lanes have sold off his property. This house and the headland are all that are left, and they are worth little enough. They belong to me."

The girl hesitated a moment as if what she was to tell was too fresh in memory to be approached without sharp emotion.

"After I finished my schooling I came to live here," she said. "My parents are dead. My aunt, Mrs. Sedgewick, looks after my home and me. I have few friends here. There is my cousin, Mr. Carnavan, who came down from New York this summer to spend a vacation, and one other visitor, John Goss."

"The man who disappeared?" Markman asked.

The girl shuddered. "Yes, as I telegraphed you."

"Who is Mr. Goss?"

"I have known him about a year. We met last winter in New York at the home of mutual friends. Mr. Goss is a lawyer and has a small practice, I believe. His family home is in the South. I have not met his people. But he is an honest, honorable man, I'll swear to that!"

"You are very fond of him?"

"We were to be married next month, Professor Markman."

Markman looked sympathetic as the girl's lip quivered and her eyes grew moist. "Just tell me all that happened," he said encouragingly. "I'm sure we'll find Mr. Goss and get everything all straight in no time."

Cora continued, calming herself with a visible effort. "Mr. Goss was here as my guest. He came last week, a few days after my cousin arrived. We were all on the best of terms, enjoying the sea and country, and preparing for our quiet wedding. Nothing happened between us, no quarrel, no unpleasantness or warning of any sort. We were a united family until Monday evening. Then John Goss vanished."

"In just what way, Miss Lane?"

"Simply vanished!" The girl's eyes overflowed with tears. She clasped her hands in her lap, bit her lip and struggled for composure.

"We were sitting in this same room at almost this hour on Monday, two days ago. I rose to dress for dinner and left John in that easy-chair near the mantel, reading a Boston paper. I returned to the room within ten minutes. John Goss was gone. The paper lay beside his chair. When he did not appear for dinner we searched. He had vanished. There was no trace of him, nor hint of where or how he went. He just disappeared!" Cora touched a handkerchief to her eyes, then turned on Markman a face as tragic in its woe as any the elderly detective ever had seen.

"H'm! Now, let's see. Goss's bags and luggage? Did they go, too?"

"Nothing went, so far as we can learn. His things are untouched in his room. I do not believe he went near his room at all."

"And he left no message, no token, no sign even of his going?"

"Nothing! This room was exactly as it was when I left him in it."

"You—ah—you parted on the best of terms?"

"I kissed him when I left the room,"

Cora sobbed. "There was no hint of a quarrel between us."

"Now, let's see! Your household consists of your aunt, Mrs. Sedgewick; your cousin, Joseph Carnavan; the maid Annie—and any others?"

"Only Tom, the gardener and utility man."

"And these people? Where were they?"

"My aunt was in her room dressing. Cousin Joseph had stopped to mix a salad dressing in the serving pantry—he is very particular about his French dressing. Annie was in the kitchen which opens off the serving pantry, busy with her work. Tom did not appear for half an hour after the search began. He had taken the depot car on a household errand."

Markman smiled. "A very businesslike report! I see you went into this affair properly. And, of course, none of these people had any word of Mr. Goss? Very odd! Really, a man can't vanish into thin air in the midst of a houseful of people, especially a normal, hungry young man as I take Mr. Goss to be, and just at dinner time!"

"Professor Markman, this is not a joke to me!"

"No, no! I beg your pardon! I did not mean to joke. However, in a day or two it may not seem so tragic, my dear. Now there is one man in your account whose time does not seen to be accounted for; that is Tom. What do you know of him?"

"He has worked here two summers. He is a native of the village, and honest and industrious."

"And did he get on well with Goss?"

"John Goss was a friend of everybody!" After this loyal declaration Cora paused a moment, hesitated and added: "I think John did have a little misunderstanding with Tom—something about Tom's treatment of an old horse in our stable. It was that same afternoon. I know that Tom was angry with him."

Markman nodded. "I'll talk with Tom," he promised. "That seems our only suggestion of a hint at this moment. Yet, as I say, a normal young man in love and hungry for dinner simply cannot vanish from the spot where the girl he loves happens to be—and at dinner time—not without a very powerful incentive indeed. A very fascinating case, Miss Lane, a thoroughly delightful case!"

Cora Lane was about to protest angrily at the apparent levity of the detective's tone, to remind him that what he considered so enchanting a ploblem was stark, grim tragedy to her. And at that moment the reminder came, sharp and clear, but not from Cora.

Outside the house a woman screamed, a scream of mortal terror, so prolonged and shrill that it brought both listeners to their feet, their eyes dilated, mouths open, the very hair of their heads stirring at the alarm.

CHAPTER THREE

THE VANISHING WINDOW

EVEN as Cora and the detective leaped up the library door burst open to admit Annie, the cook.

Annie Grimes was a native of the village of Squam, a middle-aged lady of generous build, red-faced, inclined to good nature and a great singer of hymns as she worked.

As she ran into the library the woman's large face was pasty white and her wide-open mouth made a great, black letter O in that white expanse. Her hair was awry, drops of rain glistened on her skin and dripped from her clothes. She was gasping painfully.

It was toward Cora that Annie ran. "It's out there!" she screamed hoarsely. "I seen it with my own eyes, Miss Cora. It was gibing and gibbering at me out from behind the iron bars! Oh, Lord! Oh, Lord, have mercy on me!"

The cook threw herself on the girl's frail shoulder and continued to groan and gasp. Cora Lane's questions fell on deaf ears until she re-enforced her demands with an angry shake of the bulky figure. "Now tell us what's out there?" she demanded sharply.

Annie gasped and rolled her eyes. "I

seen it," she whimpered. "It was leering out at me and mouthing something terrible —the ghost of mad old Seth Lane himself—looking out of his madhouse window!"

"Seth Lane's ghost!"

Annie's report was echoed in a shrill screams from Mrs. Sedgewick, who had entered the room in time to hear the words.

On the heels of Cora's aunt came Carnavan. He, too, was in time to hear the cause of the terror. A decided "Nonsense!" was his answer, and he dashed from the room again.

Cora placed the servant in the chair she had quitted with more emphasis than tenderness. "Annie Grimes," she said sharply, "tell us exactly what happened. There isn't any ghost. Tell us what you did see?"

"I saw old Seth Lane, I tell you. I did, Miss Cora! And old Seth, shaking his prison bars like folks say he used to do more'n a century ago in this very house!"

"What were you doing outside? How did you come to see this?" Markman took up the questioning. At his command Annie quieted and spoke with coherence and calm, except for her rolling eyes.

"I missed some pas'ley, Miss Cora; forgot to git me some to garnish the lamb. So I slipped out to the kitchen garden after a sprig, knowing where it was so well I didn't have to take any lantern along. Just as I was coming back the depot car came 'round the corner of the drive and its lights struck against the house wall. And there I seen a window I never seen before, a little barred window, and behind them bars old Seth Lane, just like I tell you. Then I yelled for God's mercy and came a-runnin'."

"That's a fact!"

Everybody turned to stare at the newcomer who stood in the door, rain dripping from his yellow oilskins and sou'wester hat. It was Tom, the gardener.

"I heard her yell when I drove around the house," Tom declared stoutly. "I looked up and I saw that window and the old man's face looking out at us! Oh, gosh!"

Ford Markman snatched up the cane from the table beside him. "That's right!" Tom agreed. "Come look for yourself. It's right there now!"

The two men, Markman hobbling in the lead, hurried through the hall that divided the old house, toward a rear entrance. Cora Lane followed at their heels and, clutching her arm, came her aunt. The cook, left alone, was heard bellowing dismally.

As the little party hurried into the night Joseph Carnavan joined them at the door.

The lights of the station car greeted them with a white glare. The car stood slewed across the drive as Tom had left it at the alarm, the glaring beam of it headlights focussed full on the stone walls of the old house. Through these tunnels of brilliance the storm drove its raindrops in glittering diamonds.

"Look for yourself," Tom was grumbling. "There!"

The man ranged Markman, his back to the automobile, and pointed his finger at the illuminated wall. Then he caught his breath and gaped. The others gaped with him.

"Well," Markman said slowly, "if you can see anything."

"By glory!" Tom whispered, awed. "It *was* there. I saw it, just the same as Annie did! It was there, I tell you—a barred window right up between the first and second floors!"

"Tom, you've been visiting the local bootlegger again!" Joseph Carnavan spoke sharply.

"That's a lie!" Tom answered fiercely. "You know 't'ain't so. Smell my breath, if you don't believe me."

"There certainly is nothing there now!" Markman exclaimed. "Nothing except stone wall."

Nor was there. The headlights played over the solid masonry of the old house. On this side toward the sea it was bare even of ivy. No barred window could be seen.

"Annie got scared of the dark," Carnavan said disgustedly. "She saw something move in the glare of the headlight—probably some gull driven in by the storm and startled by the glare. Then she yelled and scared Tom."

Ford Markman considered the mute evidence of an alarm, indicated plainly enough by the utility car slewed across the scuffed-

up gravel of the drive, by Annie's little basket of parsley tops dropped in her fright, by all the clamor of the last few minutes.

"Somebody was frightened," he agreed. "We're pretty sure of that, anyhow. Get a ladder, Tom. Let's have a look at that wall."

"By all means get a ladder. We'll settle this ghost story right here and now," Carnavan echoed.

CHAPTER FOUR

A TELEGRAM

FORD MARKMAN and Joseph Carnavan sat smoking in the dining-room of the old house.

Dinner was finished. It had been an erratic meal. Annie, the cook, had declared stoutly that no consideration of love or money would keep her in Lane's Folly any longer than she needed to pack her things. She had been as good as her word, setting out on foot through the storm for the house of a cousin several miles distant. She would have walked the entire distance had not Cora dispatched Tom with the light car to help her on her way.

As a consequence of Annie's defection the diners had served themselves and had considerable trouble in doing it. From the serving-pantry off the kitchen there came now confused sounds of dishes being washed, Cora and her aunt having volunteered for this task.

"Of course the ghost story, like all of its kind, is complete nonsense," Markman was saying. "They saw a stray seagull flying in the light and imagined the rest, as you say."

"Well, Professor Ford, you examined the wall for yourself," Carnavan had sunk comfortably in his chair, blowing smoke rings at the ceiling.

Markham nodded. It had been no small task, considering the necessity of feigning a badly wrenched ankle, but he had made a careful examination and was convinced that the wall of the old house was solid masonry at the point where Annie declared the ghostly window and the leering face of the madman had been seen

"Just where did the son keep old Seth Lane?" he asked idly.

Carnavan smiled.

"There's no mystery about that. I got interested in the local legend and looked the facts up. Lane had a room built off a corner of the old kitchen. He was an unmarried man at the time and lived pretty much as a farmer bachelor might be expected to, making the kitchen his dining-room and general headquarters. A partition was run across and shut off a corner and a window was knocked in the wall. It had bars across it, I dare say. After Seth Lane's death this room was demolished, but there remains one or two traces in the old woodwork."

"And the old story of Seth Lane's hidden treasure?"

Carnavan smiled and shrugged.

"Oh, well, you know how those things grow in the telling. Maybe the old reprobate hid something around the place. Personally, I doubt if he did. He invested a lot in building this place and buying land—probably invested about all that he had acquired in his mysterious two years at sea. Nobody ever found anything that I ever heard of."

"And I suppose plenty of the Lanes since his time have looked?"

"Yes, I suppose so. I used to, when I was a boy and Cora and I prowled over the old house."

"And what is your theory about John Goss?"

Carnavan looked his surprise.

"Oh, I suppose Cora said something?"

"Yes. Mrs. Sedgewick referred to the incident and Miss Lane gave me the details. A sad case."

Carnavan agreed with ringing sincerity. "Tragic, Professor Ford. By George, you don't know how badly we all feel on Cora's account. I can't make it out. Mind you, I got to know John Goss pretty well. A splended chap! Seemed to have all the stability and character you could ask of a husband, even for a girl as good as Cora. Why, they were the ideal couple."

The detective nodded complete sympathy

and understanding with this attitude of family affection.

"Mind you," Carnavan continued, "I looked up John Goss. Yes, on Cora's account, and being her nearest male relative I went into his reputation pretty carefully. Seemed to be first rate. Comes from a Southern family, down Mobile way. Graduate of a Southern law school, associated with a good, sound New York firm for three years, then struck out for himself with a promising practice in realty titles. Just the sort of first-rate young chap a man would want to see Cora marry."

Markman nodded again. His own investigation made in New York on receipt of Cora Lane's telegram convinced him that Carnavan was telling the exact facts.

"Do you suppose there might be some urgent—well, not to be too circumspect, some other attraction, or some entanglement like that which would lead him to drop out?" he asked.

Carnavan sat bolt upright, his dark eyes flashing.

"If I thought there was anything like that—any crookedness or deceit—I'd find John Goss, if it took me all my life, and wring his neck for him."

"I don't blame you for feeling that way."

"But I don't believe there's anything of the sort," Carnavan added hastily. "No. I tell you I knew the man. I liked him. He was a good, decent, straight chap."

"But a complete disappearance—in the space of ten minutes—and in a lonely neighborhood where every man's coming and going is a matter of interest and note."

Carnavan shrugged hopelessly.

"Well, he vanished. That's all I know about it."

"Yes, he went," Markman agreed, shaking his head, "but he had some powerful reason, depend upon it."

Both men started forward in their chairs as the detective ceased to speak. A bell was ringing somewhere in the kitchen, the electric doorbell.

The serving-pantry door opened hastily and Cora Lane and her aunt entered the room, a question in their eyes.

"I'll answer it," Carnavan declared, rising. "Forgot for the moment that we have no servant."

Markman had risen, too, leaning on his cane. He hobbled after Carnavan.

"We'll all answer it," Cora declared and led her aunt after them.

The ringing of the bell was re-enforced by a pounding on the heavy oak panel as they neared the front door. Carnavan swept it open and the light disclosed a dripping figure in oilskins.

"Telegram for Miss Lane," a querulous voice announced. "The operator said it was pretty darn important, or I'd never rid my motorcycle out here tonight."

Carnavan took the tendered message and hesitated. Cora Lane snatched it from his hands. Womanlike, she hesitated, then turned the yellow envelope in her fingers. With sudden decision she snatched a wire pin from her hair and ripped open the message. As she read they watched anxiously.

The telegram took some time in the reading. Cora's face expressed no emotion as she mastered its contents, but the color left her cheeks.

Standing erect, white of face, curiously still of expression, Cora stared at the wall over all their heads. She spoke slowly and her lips formed the words with difficulty:

"I don't believe a word of it. It's a lie!" Her hushed voice rose to a shrill scream. "A lie!" she cried harshly, and as suddenly her knees bent and she crumpled in her aunt's ready arms.

Markman and Carnavan both sprang to the assistance of the stout little lady who was struggling to support the girl's limp body. Between them they carried Cora Lane to her own room and left Mrs. Sedgewick to make her comfortable.

As they were about to quit the room Carnavan whispered:

"That telegram. Where is it?"

Markman drew the yellow envelope from his pocket.

"I picked it up as she dropped it."

As he spoke the detective turned toward the bed and pressed the envelope into Mrs. Sedgewick's hand.

"Hadn't we better read it?" Carnavan suggested anxiously.

"I think not. Speaking for myself, a stranger, I am certain we should not. You and Mrs. Sedgewick must decide for yourselves—but it strikes me it is Miss Lane's private affair."

Carnavan looked doubtful and Mrs. Sedgewick disappointed. But Markman seemed quite positive, and Mrs. Sedgewick settled the matter by placing the message in Cora Lane's writing-desk and then locked the desk. The key she placed in the girl's own hand.

Yet Markman knew the contents of the telegram perfectly. He had found time in the excitement and the difficult task of carrying the young woman to her room to read and memorize the message. He repeated it to himself as they left Cora Lane to her aunt:

"Forgive me, Cora Lane. I had no right to engage myself to you. Another woman, my wife now, had a stronger claim.

"JOHN GOSS."

CHAPTER FIVE

A NIGHT ALARM

JOSEPH CARNAVAN suggested that Tom, the gardener, sleep in the library of the old house that night.

"We've had so many alarms," Carnavan explained. "I think Cora would rest easier if she knew that somebody was on the ground floor and ready to look after the place if necessary."

Ford Markman agreed readily. The three men made Tom comfortable on a couch.

"I won't sleep a wink," Tom said stoutly. "Got enough to think about to last me a month. By gorry, you'd have, too, if you'd seen that old Seth Lane shaking the bars of his prison window like I did."

"Tom, that's utter rot, and you know it," Carnavan said angrily. "Don't ever mention that matter again."

Tom shook his head stubbornly.

"Saw him, just the same. I guess I ain't no fool—not yet a while."

"I'm not so certain," Carnavan muttered to Markman.

The arrangement was explained to Cora.

The girl had been gotten into bed by her aunt and had recovered much of her composure. But she looked white and tired. However, she managed a smile of gratitude toward Carnavan that amply thanked him for his care of her. They all said good-night, but Cora called the detective back as the others left. When they were alone she whispered:

"I must show you that telegram."

Markman shook his head.

"I have read it."

Cora's fingers gripped tightly over the elderly man's.

"You don't—truly you don't believe——"

"Not for a minute, my dear girl. Not for a second. That telegram is a blind, nothing more. Don't let it worry you."

"But why? What possible motive could anybody have for getting rid of John Goss? What possible motive could they have for making me suffer? If I was rich—if I had enemies—if——"

"Miss Lane," Markman whispered earnestly, "we'll know the answer to those questions before we get through. It may take a little time, but we'll find out, I promise you. Meantime, you must rest and sleep."

"Sleep!" Cora's voice was bitter.

"Do the best you can, then. Don't worry and leave things to me. Good-night!"

Carnavan was waiting at the door.

"Miss Lane is a dear, thoughtful girl," the detective exclaimed as he hobbled beside the younger man. "In the midst of all her worry she takes time to apologize to me—the unbidden guest—for the disturbances that have alarmed her so. Well, well! It's seldom you find such young women in this jazz age."

"Cora Lane is an angel," Carnavan agreed heartily. "Well, good-night, Professor Ford. I think we all deserve a sound sleep after this." They shook hands heartily and Markman entered the room assigned to him.

The old house grew still. The northeaster still howled about its stout eaves and the surf boomed great guns against the granite headland. Within the rooms were dark excepting only the library, where a shaded lamp revealed Tom, the gardener, stretched flat on his couch, half dressed. His mouth was open in a comical expression that caricatured alarm, but the heavy, stertorous breathing of the man told of perfect rest, undisturbed by any further visions of Mad Seth Lane. Tom had put in a hard day. In spite of good resolutions tired muscles had their way and he slept.

Cora Lane lay awake. The rapid succession of tragic events had upset her too completely to hope for natural rest. She stared into the darkened room and turned uneasily from time to time.

The complete and sudden vanishing of the man she loved admitted no logical explanation save the one in the telegram. She kept insisting with fierce, determined loyalty that the message was a lie, but her logic could not comprehend any other reason for Goss's going. And because she loved Goss, and was only human, she could not put aside entirely the torturing pangs of jealousy of some other woman who might have claimed him on the eve of their marriage.

Cora heard the clock strike one and two and the single stroke of half-past two. It was then she rose suddenly in bed, her nerves tingling at a new alarm.

A breath ran through the old house, a dread breath that warned everything living of peril. Faint at first, it came to the girl's nostrils unmistakably clear, the acrid, choking smell of smoke.

Cora swung herself from under the covers and snatched up a wrap. Her lips opened to scream an alarm, and at that instant from the floor below the alarm was cried by Tom, the gardener.

Cora ran from her room. In the corridor she had a distinct vision of a man darting down the stair, half-clad. She thought it Carnavan, and screamed a question at him. But the question was not answered, and her cousin disappeared with a bound down the rear stair used by the servants.

Cora darted to the main stairway and met the gardener running upward. A thick cloud of smoke billowed up from the hallway.

"Roust your aunt out," Tom bellowed. "She's a-burnin', Miss Lane, and not much chance to save her tonight. Roust your aunt and the other gentleman."

They ran to the first door in the corridor, the door to Markman's room. It stood ajar and the room was empty. The detective's bed showed wild disarray, clothes were scattered. Evidently he had caught the warning ahead of Cora and gone below to investigate.

Mrs. Sedgewick's scream summoned them then.

At first sight of the figure that met them at this door Cora and the gardener started back appalled. Such a grotesque mask bore only a faint resemblance to anything human. The swollen, distorted face glistened dreadfully under the hall light. Wisps of hair started in wild disarray all about the skull.

"Seth Lane's ghost again!" Tom bellowed and, tripping over a rug, met the floor with a crash.

"Aunt Betty!" Cora gasped. "Aunt! What is it? Your face! Oh, what has happened to your face?"

The reply was unexpectedly snappish.

"Oh, shut up. You don't have to tell the county, do you? It's nothing—just that darn beauty clay I've been using on my skin. Hand me a towel and stop your yelling—and get that dratted man out of here. I don't care if the place is on fire."

It was fully ten minutes later that the women reached the ground floor of the house and groped their way through thick smoke toward the kitchen, whence came sounds of men's voices. Mrs. Sedgewick had insisted on bringing her jewels and her pet canary in its cage. She had insisted also on some semblance of a toilette that restored her to normalcy.

Through the smoke they made out Tom, Carnavan and Markman. Carnavan reassured them at once.

"Somebody left the draft of the kitchen range on. It got red hot and set fire to a wood box and a little of the paneling. It's all out now."

"I want the car, Cora; you hear? Get the car at once," Mrs. Sedgewick whimpered. "I won't spend another minute in this dreadful house."

"I tell you the fire's out," Carnavan insisted.

"Certainly," Markman agreed, joining them. "It was nothing but smoke, I assure you, Mrs. Sedgewick." The detective wore trousers and a shirt, but his usually immaculate linen collar and stiff cuffs were missing and his shirt was black with soot. "It's all over now," he hurried on. "Let's go back to bed and forget about it until morning."

In spite of these assurances it needed half an hour to restore order. At length Mrs. Sedgewick was persuaded to go to bed and the others followed her up the stairs.

Markman lingered a moment beside Cora Lane.

"Don't undress," the detective whispered, "and leave your door ajar. You are not afraid to take a little risk?"

"If it will help things any I'll risk my life."

"Well, I think you'll find it will pay you. It may answer some questions. When I scratch at your door, be ready. Have you a pistol, by any chance?"

"Yes," she whispered tensely.

"Good," Markman replied. "Throw it out of the window—just as far as you can. Mind, you obey orders."

Markman chuckled as the door closed on her promise.

"A woman with a pistol is one thing I absolutely refuse to take chances with," he grinned.

CHAPTER SIX

THE SECRET

A STEALTHY scratching against Cora's door brought the girl to the corridor fully dressed. She had followed Markman's advice and waited in patience, though the moments of her waiting seemed to stretch beyond human comprehension.

"How about that pistol?" the detective whispered as he led her toward the stairs.

"I didn't bring it. You said——"

"Good girl. I could make a good detective of you in time." Markman's hand tightened on her arm. "Be very quiet," he whispered. "Tom's asleep and it would take a cannon to wake him, but others may be more restless."

Markman led the way to the library. The shaded lamp still burned, giving a dim illumination, and the embers glowed in the wide hearth. Markman studied the room thoughtfully.

"Here," he whispered, and going to the wall farthest from the door pulled aside an old chest. "Get behind this—not very comfortable, but make the best of it."

The detective settled himself beside Cora. Behind the chest they were effectively concealed from the vision of anybody in the room.

"Are you a good fisherman?" Markman whispered as they settled down.

"I'll try to be."

"Then let's pray for fisherman's luck."

Silence again.

Behind the chest the watchers were cramped for room. Their muscles protested at the vigil. Apparently everybody in the house slept. Tom's heavy breathing culminated at regular intervals in a choking snore that seemed fit to lift him bodily from his couch. Yet the man slept.

So suddenly that Cora barely suppressed a scream a man materialized at the open door of the library. They saw his figure but dimly, the blur of face and hands against the velvet dusk. The figure hesitated for perhaps a minute, then vanished without a sound.

But a moment later, although no sound heralded it, a breath of colder air swept the house and the boom of breakers grew loud in their ears, then died down. A door had been opened and closed.

Markman indulged in another chuckle.

"Men's minds work pretty much alike," he whispered in Cora's ear. "Now listen a minute."

Very faintly to their straining ears came a humming that grew closer and ceased. It

sounded suggestively like the hum of an automobile engine. Again the boom of breakers broke out as the door opened.

Markman was on his feet, his hand dragging Cora up.

"Quick!"

The detective led the way across the room to one of the tall bookcases built into the wall. His fingers felt over the paneled frame and pressed. The bookcase swung ajar, revealing a narrow, dark wedge of deeper black, admitting a cooler air.

"Don't be afraid," Markman whispered. Grasping Cora's hand, he led her into the blackness and closed the secret door behind them.

"Where are we?" Cora tried to hold her voice to a low whisper.

Markman answered with startling heartiness:

"In Seth Lane's old prison. Don't be afraid—we can talk. We could yell and nobody could hear us outside. But we mustn't talk for long. Look!"

The detective took an electric torch from his pocket, snapped on its light and swept the stone walls and floor. Cora screamed.

Almost at their feet lay the body of a man.

The girl dropped to the floor beside it, turning the face in her hands.

"John," she sobbed; "John Goss."

"I rather imagined this was Goss," Markman agreed dryly.

"He's dead?"

"No, my dear—and not hurt. Drugged, that's all. Now, into that corner and not a breath out of you."

As he spoke Markman seized the girl and swept her along, pulling her down beside him against the stone wall of the prison room. He extinguished his electric torch and the blackness was absolute.

To their straining ears there came a sibilant, murmurous swish of an opening panel and dim light from the library. The panel closed again and another man stood in the room with them. They could hear his breathing.

Cora Lane felt Markman's movement as he crouched beside her, his muscles tensing.

The stranger had brought his own pocket-flash and it spat out its wavering circle of brilliance at this moment.

The lamp picked out the senseless prisoner. Then it jumped, as if by instinct, along the wall.

What the light revealed then was met by a howl of astonishment that was not human. The intruder sprang backward, the flash dropping from his hand.

"Seth Lane," he gasped. "Mad old Seth Lane. Oh, God!"

Seen unexpectedly in that place and that light, Ford Markman, crouching for a spring, his gray hair disarrayed, his eyes shining, his mouth half open, looked very much like the maniac founder of Lane's Folly, dead these many years.

Like a madman the detective launched himself at the other and they went down together.

The place was deafening with the sound of their struggle, yet Cora Lane, huddling against the cold stone wall, in utter blackness, had no news of the fight. If her screams of fright joined the pandemonium nobody heard.

Out of a moment of comparative quiet Markman's voice struck cheerily:

"I think that will hold him. Now the light, please. Come over to me and feel in my coat pocket for it."

In Cora's hand the torch winked alight again and turned its eye upon the detective seated on a prostrate form that glared up wildly.

Markman's prisoner was Joseph Carnavan.

Cora's astonishment was banished by a further direction:

"Wake up Tom. I need him now. You can open that panel by lifting the big iron bar and pushing against it. We'll talk things over after we've got handcuffs on our man."

CHAPTER SEVEN

SETH LANE'S TREASURE

THE inmates of Lane's Folly were in the library. Dawn was graying the windows and the storm had dropped.

Joseph Carnavan sat sulkily, his hands held before him in the stiff and unaccumtomed embrace of steel cuffs.

John Goss, pallid and weak, but clear-minded, was propped on a couch. They had worked two long hours with hot cuffee and restoratives, combatting the effect of the drug which held him insensible.

Beside Goss Cora sat and his arm was about her.

Mrs. Sedgewick, fluttering and round-eyed, amply filled a wide-armed chair, and Tom sat bolt upright in another.

As master of ceremonies, Markman stood on his feet. His identity was no longer a secret. Excepting Carnavan, they regarded him with a respectful attention. Carnavan only smiled scornfully.

"We'll begin with you, Mr. Goss," Markman announced. "Tell us what you can of your experience, beginning with the moment Cora left you alone in the library reading the paper."

Goss passed a shaking hand across his eyes.

"What can I tell?" he exclaimed huskily. "It has been almost a blank—utter unconsciousness, sometimes weird dreams and one vivid few minutes I shall never forget." He shuddered painfully.

"Cora left me in the library. I was reading the paper. Everything was normal, peaceful, happy. Cora had kissed me as she left the room. I thought about her—and how soon our wedding would take place. I was too happy to pay much attention to the newsprint before my eyes.

"Some warning, perhaps it was a slight sound, or a light draft of air, or perhaps just that queer sixth sense that sometimes tells us of danger, caused me to drop the paper and look over my shoulder. Even as I started up I was conscious of a stinging, pungent smell—like ether, or some powerful drug. I was caught in a strong grip, struggled a moment—and knew nothing."

Goss paused. He was shaking violently. Cora's hand caressed his face, soothing him. He gave the girl a wan smile and went on with distinct effort:

"I don't know how to picture to you what followed. Imagine it happening to yourself. Imagine yourself in the deepest sleep, in a state of coma—then reviving slowly to find yourself in the dark, a hard stone floor beneath you, chill, stale air to breathe, in utter ignorance of where you were or what had happened. That was my sensation.

"But as I stared I made out a small square of gray light—or at least a darkness less dense. A damp wind blew in from that and I knew it to be a window. I rose shakily and found the window far above my head, almost out of my reach. But it was a window, and I was in some sort of stone room, a prisoner. I knew those things and memory pieced together the last moments in the library. I knew I was not out of my head. Something assured me of that. I proved it by going over in my mind events of the last day. No, I was sane, and a prisoner. And my prison had a little window, faintly showing against the night. Food was passed in to me through a small sliding panel in the door at regular intervals.

"I did the only thing that suggested itself, jumped and managed to lock my hands over the stone sill. I muscled myself to that window and breathed purer air and peered into a wild night. By the gale I guessed that some time had passed since I was in the library, for that had been a fine evening.

"I could only cling to the window ledge a short time before my muscles tired. In intervals I prowled the room I was in and shouted for help. Then, while I was clinging again to the window ledge there burst over me a blinding flash of light, automobile headlights I am certain, for I heard a motor racing. With the light came a woman's scream. A man shouted. I shouted, too, as loud as I could, yelling for help. I clung to that ledge yelling until I dropped exhausted. Then I roused myself and climbed up again. The lights shone in my face, but nobody seemed there to answer me. I was seized suddenly from behind and pulled down into the dark, and that same stinging, pungent drug smell made my head swim. I knew nothing more until the moment I found myself on this couch with Cora's face looking into mine."

Goss buried his face against his fiancée's

shoulder, and Cora held him in her arms, comforting him.

Ford Markman cleared his throat.

"Are you ready to confess your part in this, Carnavan?" he asked sternly.

Carnavan shrugged.

"My dear Professor Markman, I confess nothing. On the contrary, I insist I am perfectly innocent. I only came into that hidden room because you left the secret panel open and my curiosity was roused. Really, you must avoid slanderous suspicions."

"Very well," Markman agreed. "Then listen to me. Cora can corroborate the important facts in my case. I was brought here by Miss Lane to find John Goss, who had mysteriously vanished. The first hint I got of the manner of that disappearance came in the cook's wild story of the ghost. However, that story was susceptible of a perfectly plausible explanation—the woman's fright at a seagull or some stray bird, seen in the suddenly thrown beam from the automobile light.

"You, Carnavan, supplied the next clue in a stupid lie."

Carnavan's eyes widened and he gaped.

"I did?"

"You did. I casually asked what had become of the room where Lane kept the old madman confined years ago. Explaining that the room had been demolished, you said it was originally barricaded off the kitchen, and to give the tale plausibility mentioned that the son was a bachelor farmer who used the kitchen, as most farmers do, as his living and dining-room and general headquarters. All very good, except that young Lane was an aristocrat like the old man and kept a retinue of servants and a country estate like other country gentlemen of his time. I smelled a rat at that moment, Carnavan, and my investigation of the old kitchen did not bare out your story. And being suspicious I also recalled that you disappeared suddenly and for some minutes at the first cry of ghost raised by Annie. I understand now why you did this. You had opened that window to Seth Lane's old prison, probably with the humane idea of keeping your prisoner from dying of suffocation. The night was wild. Nobody was likely to be out. It seemed perfectly safe to you to remove the stone—which was, in reality, only a cunning light screen with a thin stone surface fitted over the old bars—and give your prisoner, whom you still thought to be insensible, fresh air. But the accident of the automobile lights striking the wall betrayed the window and you rushed to cover up your mistake and drug your man into quietness again."

"Prove it," Carnavan jeered.

"I think I can. I set that fire in the kitchen later for just that purpose. It acted as I intended, brought you on the run and led you to rush directly to the secret panel behind which your prisoner was hid. I had no idea where that panel was, nor more than a general notion where Lane had concealed the prison chamber, but I was watching you and you betrayed the secret at the first alarm.

"After those two alarms, which threatened to give away your plans, you decided, just as I thought you would, to remove your prisoner to a safer hiding place before morning. But this time I had Miss Lane with me to witness who visited that prison chamber.

"Joseph Carnavan, you drugged John Goss and hid him. Your purpose was a conspiracy to delay Goss's marriage to Cora Lane—for a very good reason of your own. Do you confess now?"

Carnavan answered stoutly, looking the detective in the eye:

"I most certainly do not. You can't prove that charge."

"Why should he do that?" Cora cried. "What has Joseph against John Goss? What grudge has he against me?"

"Yes, why, in Heaven's name," Goss echoed.

"I think I can answer," Markman said. "I have had two assistants in New York busy on this case since receiving Miss Lane's telegram. Joseph Carnavan is a young man of expensive habits. He has dissipated his own money, a comfortable income—gambled it away. At present he is badly in need of funds. Miss Lane, did your cousin ever show any preference for

your society, any fondness for you, prior to the last few weeks?"

"Yes, he has. I—why, I was very touched by his friendship; I felt I could trust him. He was like a brother."

"No doubt you would have trusted him then to transact any important business that might come up—in Goss's absence?"

"Most certainly."

"Well, what of it?" Carnavan demanded. "Can't a man be fond of his own cousin—even be glad to serve her—without being a villain?"

"Certainly," Markman agreed. "But if he's in love with her pocketbook only, then I say he is a villain. Carnavan, you've found out Seth Lane's secret. You know where that treasure is that Lane hid. Because it is your cousin's property you saw a chance to get her confidence, discover the money later, and make a good part of it your own."

Carnavan considered slyly.

"I'll tell you one thing, Mr. Detective," he smiled suddenly, "nobody else knows about that treasure. Nobody ever will, unless you and Cora are willing to come to terms."

"I'll die poor first," Cora vowed.

"Not so fast!" Markman exclaimed. Crossing the room, he talked earnestly with the girl. She nodded finally. "What terms do you want, Joseph?" she asked.

"One-half of what you get," Carnavan declared boldly. "Remember, I found it. And otherwise you'll never get a cent."

"Fair enough," Markman said mildly. "A fair bargain. And we'll overlook your treatment of John Goss."

"Oh, that. Anything's fair in love and war. Beside, I wasn't going to murder him or anything. Just keep him out of the way for a few days until Cora got to trust more in me. If I handled him a little roughly it was all on account of Cora."

"A little thing like having that lying telegram sent to Cora was merely another proof of your extraordinary fondness for her—your desire to spare her further worry, I suppose?" Markman smiled.

"Nothing more serious," Carnavan said airily. "Now if you and Cora want to sign a contract with me, I'll tell you what I know about the old man's hidden gold——"

"You need tell nothing. You have told all we need to know." Markman was on his feet and his voice rang sternly. "You have confessed, that's what we wanted to get."

"But the treasure," Mrs. Sedgewick cried anxiously.

"Gosh, how about that chest full of money?" Tom seconded.

"A myth," Markman smiled. "There is no chest of gold. If old Seth Lane had a treasure, which he probably did, he evidently spent it on this house and lands. He spent it before he died. And yet there is a treasure here, a treasure of another kind. It was that hidden treasure which made Carnavan so suddenly attentive to his cousin—and jealous of John Goss's standing. Shall I tell about it, Carnavan?"

"Damn you, I don't care what you say," Carnavan growled. The man saw he had been tricked into confessing. What hurt him was to lose in this battle of wits.

Markman took up the challenge.

"The treasure I speak of is this point of land—Lane's Folly. What Joseph Carnavan found out and was careful not to tell was that a hotel syndicate operating huge resorts along this coast has secretly decided to buy Lane's Folly from Cora. Carnavan learned this through an associate who is private secretary to one of the directors of the syndicate. The information was sold to him on the understanding that it would be well paid for when the deal went through. And Carnavan's little scheme was to put John Goss away—not injure him, I am certain of that—until such a time as he could finish his own plan. With Goss out of the way, Joseph, the devoted cousin, would be Cora's nearest male relative. He would conduct the sale of this land, and he would see to it, through a secret understanding, that a good share of the money would remain in his own pocket. After that Goss could be accidentally discovered and nobody be the wiser."

Carnavan's head sank on his breast. He had no need of words to admit his defeat. His whole attitude pleaded guilty.

Green Flames of Revenge

By RICHARD INSCORE

CHAPTER ONE

"ABOUT the best, if not the only, way to catch a crook as hard-boiled as Barrigan is to scare him. Ninety-nine out of every hundred of his kind are as superstitious as the devil," observed Detective Tim Dorenton, the most able veteran of the bureau, who for many years past had been adding to his enviable reputation as a successful crook catcher. Every bad man, from the crudest yegg to the cleverest "gentleman" burglar, knew and feared the name of Dorenton. His ability to ferret out the guilty party to every "job" was uncanny. It was many years of faithful and observing service that had taught him the foregoing fact regarding crooks in general. The conscience of the transgressor, he figured, was sure to sooner or later lead the guilty to retribution and justice. It was his conviction that wrong persisted in could not endure.

Up until the advent of the Merriwell jewel affair he had never failed to bring the guilty to swift justice. This latter case, however, appeared to stick him, not that he had given up—he never did that—but his comrades had come to regard him as sort of "lying down on the job." To all of their queries, however, Dorenton merely smiled inscrutibly and bade them "Watch me." Tim Dorenton knew, too, that they *were* watching him.

Dorenton's friend, Barney Wasdell, had not so many years of experience behind him. When "Iron" Barrigan, the cracksman and suspected murderer of old man Harmer, a recluse, fell into the toils, Tim had just about reached the point where he was ready to throw up the sponge, as far as a conviction went. It seemed impossible to loosen those iron jaws. This night he had sought out his old friend Barney with his most knotty problem. They were seated in the latter's comfortable apartment, poring over the proposition between puffs at their cigars.

"Scare him!" retorted Barney; "say, I figure it'd take some tall ghostliness to scare that darned sarcastic sneer off 'Iron' Barrigan's phiz. That old son-of-a-gun could play pinochle with a whole congregation of spooks and never bat an eye; in fact, I think he'd rather enjoy it."

Dorenton laughed.

"He's tough, I'll admit, but if he can't be scared into a full confession, he's the only one that I've clamped eyes on in the last seventeen years. Oh, it could be done all right, lad, provided you found the right system—key, so to speak."

"Maybe, but I believe the only 'key' that'll ever loosen up that bird's vocal organs is a four-year-old shillalah. I'd like to have the privilege of bouncing one off his dome, too!"

Wasdell spoke grimly, his eyes gleaming. His continued failures to wring a confession—even an incriminating statement—from his prisoner was grinding on his nerves maddeningly. Dorenton knew the feeling, he had had them—at first.

Again the veteran laughed. He rather enjoyed the ice of the other's cold anger.

"How did you learn so opportunely that there was anything going on in that old house?"

"I was passing along that street, sort of snooping around, when I heard a yell for help—a sort of choking yell. When I got to the room upstairs Barrigan was pawing

over some junk from an old safe he had broken into."

"Do you remember any out-of-the-ordinary circumstances surrounding the arrest directly after the supposed murder?" Dorenton asked, blowing a huge smoke-ring toward the ceiling.

"No-o, nothing was in the room except the old man's body, Barrigan and the old open safe. You know the old codger always kept a big old-fashioned safe in his little living-room with a lot of junk in it—keepsakes, or some such tommyrot. The Chief has all that stuff now pending some one's claiming it. There isn't ten cents' worth of value in the bunch!"

"Found any motive for the murder?"

"No-o. I imagine it was robbery, though. That old safe was just such a looking affair to invite Barrigan's taking a wallop at it, with the idea that the old man had money hoarded up there. Outside of that, and a few minor suppositions, I have found nothing that would seem to warrant murder."

"Know anything about Harmer's personal affairs—his habits?"

"Sort of a recluse, I believe. So far as I know, he never left the place. Kept cats as company."

Dorenton smiled a little queerly, which Wasdell failed to notice. There was an amused twinkle in his eyes.

"What was Barrigan doing the first minute you saw him?"

"Let's see—oh, yes, I remember now. There was a big black tomcat in there. Barrigan was just drawing his hand back to slam a book at it. Say, that's the first time I remembered that old cat!" Barney Wasdell sat up suddenly, looking at his friend. The latter continued to stare toward the ceiling, puffing the smoke rings, one after another.

"By gosh! Come to think of it, that old tom was bristled up like a fighting cock, and his eyes looked like two green flames. Not a very nice-looking pet, I'd say. I wonder——!" He had risen to his feet now, with his hands stuffed far into his pockets, and walked up and down the room before his friend, who continued to blow smoke rings and stare toward the ceiling.

Wasdell stopped short before Dorenton and demanded:

"What do you think, pal? Think that's the 'key'?"

"Go on, Barney, you're thinking—out loud. Doesn't sound so bad. Go on!" said the veteran, taking the cigar from his mouth and cocking an appraising eye upon his young friend.

Barney flushed a little.

"Maybe I do sound like a small boy, at that. But that's the first time that darned cat entered my mind. You know there's about a million and sixteen cats in that neighborhood; all kinds and colors. The old man had a regular menagerie of them himself, but that old devil was about the biggest and blackest varmint I ever saw."

Dorenton grinned a little, and, rising, walked to a stand in the corner of the room and picked up the Hallowe'en number of a small magazine, the cover of which was decorated with a big, spitting black cat. He held it up.

"Any resemblance?" he asked the other man.

"Gee whiz! I'll say so—that's the old back-fence himself!" said Wasdell, reaching for the magazine.

"All right; I've read the whole thing—you can have it." said Dorenton, knocking the dead ashes off his cigar into a tray.

"I can have it? You mean——" began Barney, puzzled for the moment.

"Oh, I thought you'd like to read a little creepy fiction while you're hunting for the 'key' to unlock Barrigan's talk-organs. The bird that drew that picture sure knew cats. He's got in the 'green flames' and all; he's got everything on there but the yowl—not so bad!"

"Sure, that's a fine picture of the cat I saw, I tell you. Looks just like him!"

"Um-hum! Well, Barney, my lad, run along now, and worry that brain of yours for an hour, then go to bed and forget it. Remember that ninety-nine out of every hundred crooks are as superstitious as blazes, and can usually be scared into much

more trouble than you can bulldoze 'em into. Good-night. See you tomorrow, I guess."

A minute later Barney found himself outside Dorenton's apartment door, his hat in one hand and the magazine in the other, with the bristling black cat's green eyes flaring angrily at him from the cover.

"Humph!" he muttered, walking toward the elevator, "Tim sort of leaves it to my imagination, to say the least. Superstition —black cats—I wonder? By gosh, maybe —maybe so!"

CHAPTER TWO

NEXT morning Detective Barney Wasdell walked into the police station and spoke cheerily to Rooney, the desk sergeant. The latter grunted an answer, and added:

"Say, Barney, what're we goin' t' do with that infernal Barrigan? Unless we can fasten somethin' on 'im that'll stick, it looks like we'd have ter turn 'im loose."

"Yes, does look that way, doesn't it? returned Wasdell, his countenance falling a little.

Every policeman in the city knew 'Iron' Barrigan to be a bad egg, but so far none of them had ever been able to fasten anything greater than vagrancy upon his record. Most of the old heads on the force would have given their best shirt to land him, too.

"Ther Mayor was on ther phone last night, wantin' ter know of ther Chief what we was all a-doin' not ter be gittin' somethin' on Barrigan before this. Ther Chief told 'im you was a-workin' on ther case, an' we could maybe expect results in ther next day or so."

The sergeant looked expectantly at Wasdell with an expression which said plainly that others, too, were expecting results.

"Good!" returned Barney promptly. "If he asks any more, just tell him to be patient, and we'll get Barrigan, all right."

"Here's hopin'," muttered the officer, dropping his eyes to the magazine Wasdell carried under his arm. Then he added: "What's that ye got?" nodding toward the book.

"Just a magazine. Thought I'd toss it in to Barry," replied Barney noncommitally.

"Humph!" grunted the sergeant, turning to his work.

Wasdell walked down the corridor leading to "Iron" Barrigan's cell and paused before the door.

"Hello!" he greeted, knowing he would receive scant welcome from this taciturn and scowling prisoner. "Like to read?" He tossed the magazine through the bars, and watched the man closely. He had thrown it purposely so the front cover would be up when it struck the floor.

"Iron" Barrigan glanced down at the magazine, and Wasdell was rewarded with seeing the scowl give way to a fleeting look of fear, which was simultaneous with a backward start. Barrigan quickly recovered his poise and aimed a vicious kick at the offending book, sending it into a corner of the cell, with the picture of the angry cat still upward.

"Naw, yer pin-headed idiot, I don't wanta read that stuff!" he snapped with the usual amount of polite respect he had for all policemen. "I can tell ye this, though: I wanta git outa here! Yer ain't got nothin' on me on'y circumstantial evidence, an' damn little o' that. Yer say I croaked old Harmer. I say I didn't. How was he bumped off? Yer don't know. I didn't have no gat an' 'e wasn't shot. Neither could yer find any fingerprints on 'em. Now ain't that ther dope?"

"Yep, that much is gospel, Barry; but you haven't proven what you were doing there, have you?"

"Proved? Proved the devil!" Barrigan exploded. "Fine chance an honest man's got a-provin' anything to a lot o' pin-headed dicks! Ain't I told ye I heered ther old duffer holler, an' went up ter see what was th' matter? Reckon it was ther same squall ye heered. Jest as I got there in yer came an' makes a fool o' yerself. Ye can't prove nothin' ter them as ain't got sense 'nough ter listen ter reason."

Wasdell had been watching the other closely as he delivered himself of this ti-

rade. Barrigan had often stolen a glance toward the corner of the cell where lay the magazine with the glaring cat. The detective was also rewarded with seeing a fleeting fear return to the crook's eyes. Maybe Dorenton was right—may be had the "key."

Barney purposely avoided mentioning the cat because Barrigan would see this new twist, and immediately closed up like a clam, and nothing short of TNT would loosen those jews. He knew "Iron" Barrigan.

"Well!" said Wasdell, resignedly, "suppose we'll have to let you go. We can't hold a man on nothing. I'll sure have to hand it to you for your nerve! You are either innocent of killing Harmer or have no conscience. Well, read the magazine and make yourself at home for a while. So-long."

Barrigan grunted contemptuously, a sarcastic sneer on his heavy features. Those dicks were disgusting to him. He watched Barney Wasdell stride down the corridor, then turned to the magazine lying front up on the floor. He aimed another vicious kick at it which sent it under the cot—still face up.

All that morning Barrigan sat on the edge of the bunk in stony silence. He accepted the noon meal the same way. The ugly scowl of hatred for all people connected with the police force never left his face, and the flinty eyes never changed expression unless they happened to wander toward that offending magazine. There was a certain fascination about that glaring cat which Barrigan hated. Confound that dick for bringing it! He had an inherent horror of cats, anyhow.

CHAPTER THREE

LATE that afternoon Barney Wasdell called the police station on the telephone from Dorenton's rooms. The desk sergeant answered.

"Say, Rooney, tell the Chief that I'll be hanged if I can locate anything to behead Barrigan on, and that he may as well let him go?"

"Yeah? Well, all right, I'll tell the Chief. It's all we kin do, I reckon. The old divil's a-kickin' to beat the band, an' you know he's got 'is rights; it's ayther shoot or give up the gat, fer us."

"That's right, darn it. Well, so-long."

Wasdell hung up the receiver and spoke to his friend Dorenton. There was an enthusiastic fire of new hope in his eyes. He and Dorenton had been doing some hard thinking.

"O. K., pal. I'll see you later. Don't fail me. I'd make blamed poor catmeat," he laughed, reaching for his hat.

"My lad, Timothy Dorenton don't fail."

"How about this case?" said Barney, making a wry face.

"Now, now, lad, I didn't mean it that way. You know——"

Wasdell laughed again.

"All right, pal, honest, I wasn't even thinking of the Merriwell jewels."

It was Dorenton's turn to wince. For weeks he had been answering the Chief's questions with evasions regarding the Merriwell jewels, which seemed to have been swallowed up in this air, so far as getting a line on them went. It really did look as if the infallible Dorenton was slipping. The detective knew that his reputation was at stake, and that many eyes were upon him. Part of his code, however, was not to worry, but to use his energy in work. Regardless of this, though, Dorenton winced at his friend's bantering words.

"You got me then, lad; but you just keep watching Tim Dorenton."

"Oh, I'm watching you, old pal. So's the Chief," Barney grinned maliciously. "Well, so-long."

When the door closed Dorenton's face lit up with a smile.

"That young devil's full of pep, anyway—something we old birds are getting shy on, I guess. He's learning, and learning on a mighty hard lesson, too."

When Rooney told "Iron" Barrigan he was free, the latter sneered openly:

"It's a mighty good thing I am, too. I'm sick an' tired of a bunch of dicks an' brass-button dummies skinnin' their glims over

an honest man like 'e was a crook. Fine set o' law-an'-order keepers youse are!" With this tirade, Barrigan stamped angrily from the station.

"Hard, did yer say?" grinned Rooney to the Chief, who sat at the desk back of him. "That bird's so tough I'll bet a quarter he has ter shave 'is whiskers with wire nippers."

CHAPTER FOUR

"IRON" BARRIGAN stamped his way back to the neighborhood where he hung out, and casually walked by the dilapidated old building which had been the home of Harmer and the cats. Barrigan could see nothing of the cats, and supposed they had become hungry and left. He hoped so. To him the place seemed deserted. He was glad of it. He was not fool enough, however, to suppose that he would not be watched. He knew only too well that once within the toils of the law, a crook, regardless of the degree of his crookedness, was kept under close surveillance. Well, he cared little. He was too smart for them.

Once past the ramshackle grounds and building, Barrigan turned and retraced his steps unconcernedly, looking in the other direction, or straight ahead. When he reached the corner he gave a quick glance as he turned and looked again at the old house—a certain lower floor window in particular. Then he turned his head with a grunt of satisfaction and strode on toward his dingy rooming-house.

At midnight, with the whole neighborhood quiet, and no one in sight on the street, Barrigan slouched from his rooming-house furtively with the stealth of a panther toward the street that led to the old ramshackle Harmer house.

As he turned the last corner he suddenly halted. A scream which sent cold chills up and down his spine burst upon the silence of the night. It was the angry yowl of a cat. Shivering, Barrigan cursed the owner of that hideous voice under his breath. If the night was lighter it wouldn't make so much difference, but, owing to there being no street lights in their immediate vicinity, it was dark with the Stygian blackness of hell.

Barrigan half turned to retrace his steps, then shook himself, cursing his cowardice. Cats! Nothing but accursed cats—but how he hated them! He strode resolutely into the blackness of the grounds that led up to the blacker shadow of the old building.

Drawing his flashlight from his pocket, but leaving it dark, he reached up for the window he had been watching during the afternoon. It hoisted quite readily, and he climbed into the blackness of the deserted room.

Suddenly he felt other presences in that room. Drawing his pistol from his pocket, he flashed the light on. The glare was reflected from a dozen pairs of green eyes. Cats—more cats! He longed to shoot their glaring eyes out, or to crush their heads with his heel, but dared not risk a noise, so allowed them to leap out of the open window past him. Then he opened the door into the old hall.

Up the rickety wooden stairs he felt his way with the light playing down at his feet. When he gained the landing at the top, he again flashed the light about, half expecting to encounter more cats, but none came within his vision. He heaved a sigh of relief. He was afraid to trust his temper with his hatred for cats. A noise here was not to be desired.

Barrigan sought a certain door a few steps back of the landing and tried the knob. It yielded readily, and he found himself in the same room where Detective Barney Wasdell had formerly found him. Memory of that crouching, menacing fury came to Barrigan, and he shivered. Curse those cats! He hoped none were here now. He must work fast, with no confusion, find the loose board under which he had dropped a certain little bag a few nights before, and make his getaway. Cats or some other noise-provoking enemy might bring serious trouble upon him.

Holding his pistol in his right hand in readiness for possible surprise, Barrigan

trained the flashlight upon the center of the room and pressed the button.

A suppressed exclamation of horror trembled upon his thick lips and his gun hand fell limply at his side. He felt the blood drain from his face and the flesh creep coldly around his ears and along his spine. His bulging eyes were staring with stupefaction and terror, while his breath stuck in his throat. His under jaw sagged loosely, and his knees were giving way with him.

In the center of the room, on the old table that had always been there, was the form of an old man—Harmer himself—sprawled out, face downward. A great black beast of a cat was gnawing hungrily at his unprotected face!

Forgotten was the leathern bag Barrigan had come for and forgotten was his desire for absolute quiet. His heart was flinty and his nerves of chilled steel, but that accursed cat gnawing—gnawing! He raised his gun frenziedly to kill the beast, but his horror-stricken nerves would not allow him steady aim. It was queer that Barrigan did not wonder at the body of Harmer being left here, and become suspicious. But the "key"—the "open sesame"—that Detective Dorenton had told Barney Wasdell about—that monstrous black cat—had robbed his brain of its ability to function for anything but to kill that cat!

Striving to steady his shaking hand and mouthing incoherent curses, Barrigan raised the pistol again to fire, and was steadying himself against the door frame, with the weapon pointed, when some ghostly power seemed to bear the gun downward. Something with considerable force was pressing his hand toward the floor, slowly but surely.

Then he felt the pressure slacken and he again raised the gun, cursing crazily. Once more that same force pressed the gun hand downward, and Barrigan's heart pounded sickeningly against his ribs. The room was silent as death, with the exception of the horrid gnawing and lip smacking of the big green-eyed cat and his own gasping breath.

Those two green flames from the cat's glaring eyes seemed to burn their way into the man's very soul as they gazed steadily at him over the ghastly object he was eating. It was too much. With the awful spectacle before him, and the feeling that some ghostly presence was weighing his hand downward when he raised the gun to shoot, he turned frenziedly to flee.

As Barrigan turned the final terror gripped him. With a scream of terrible anguish, the great cat leaped up, his eyes two flaming fires, and sprang toward him, uttering those unearthly yowls as he ran spitting across the room toward the door. Barrigan's knees crumpled, and he fell face downward senseless on the hall floor. The black screaming fury bounded upon him, over him, and down the stairs, and, still screaming, darted out into the alley and away.

"Holy smoke! Gangway! I'm going, too!" gasped a voice in the hall, which proved to be Dorenton's. It was his carefully wielded cane which had forced Barrigan's gun hand down.

"Hold on, pal, it's all over but the charge. I'll take that gat off Barrigan before he comes to. His nerves are slightly shaken and he might get rough. That little one-act play is sure a knock-out, I'll say!" laughed Barney Wasdell, throwing off the old faded coat and wig he had donned to look like Harmer.

"Oh, boy, I'll say so!" assented Dorenton when the lights had been flashed on. "The way that half-starved cat looked chewing and glaring at Barrigan was a caution, and when he opened his trap and made that bee-line for Barry's face, believe me, I felt like hitting for the tall timber myself."

"Too bad to have to treat a Thomas-cat that way!" lamented Barney. "He was a nice old fellow. I hated to wring his tail, too, after such a long friendship. Boy, how he did tear out of that room! Well, I hope he had a good square meal on that fish lying beside my face. But I can't say that I enjoyed the smell of it so close under my nose."

"Hello, here comes your man back," warned Dorenton, noticing the form of the yegg beginning to stir.

Barrigan sat up on the floor and glared wildly about, babbling fright still claiming

him. His eyes alighted upon the two detectives, and there seemed to be a welcome in them for their company. So great was his terror of the cat, and the foregoing experience, that he would have welcomed the devil himself in preference to any more cats.

"Well, Barry?" said Wasdell calmly.

"God a'mighty, boy—please take me—for God's sake take me outa here! Them damn cats—them damn——"

He was pleading frenziedly, clinging to the detective's knees.

"Cats—bunk! What about old Harmer?" snapped Barney, towering over the cringing, shaking form of the yegg.

"I killed 'im—killed 'im, d'ye hear! I killed 'im! I choked 'im with a towel. He was too ornery. He wouldn't give me my share of ther junk after I helped 'im git it—said he'd squeal. I meant ter choke 'im a little, an' that damn cat made a razoo at me, an' I twisted too hard, an' choked 'im t' death. That cat—was—after—my—heart!"

"Where's the loot you took from the Merriwell house?" demanded Dorenton, speaking to him for the first time.

Barney looked surprised, but remained silent. Dorenton was noted for surprises.

"Under the—under the—loose board, under the—the table."

"All right, come on!" snapped Wasdell, jerking the shivering Barrigan to his feet, when Dorenton had located the leathern bag with the Merriwell jewels intact.

CHAPTER FIVE

AN hour later, with Barrigan safely in jail again, Wasdell sought out his friend.

"What led you to think Barrigan referred to the Merriwell jewels when he mentioned the 'junk'?" he asked, very much puzzled.

Dorenton smiled.

"I had mighty good evidence all along that Barrigan had a pair of hands in the affair—about ten fingers at least."

"You mean that you had fingerprint proof that Barrigan cracked the safe?"

"Yes."

"Then why the dickens didn't you bag him before he got away?"

"He wouldn't have gotten away, lad." Dorenton smiled again. "If I had taken him in on the robbery count, you'd have had a hard time on your case, and I never would have found the jewels. Barrigan would have clamped his jaws, and the devil himself couldn't have wrung from him where they were. As it is, we got the whole business with one play. When crooks like he and old Harmer fall out, there's pretty apt to something happen just like it did—double-cross and murder. It's always been my dope, and is yet, that they can't get away with crookedness always. Enough rope will let any of them eventually hang themselves."

"Say, I wonder where that cat is?"

"Judging from the start he had, I'd say about ninety miles out, and going strong."

OPENS PRISON DOORS AT WILL

LYNDHURST, New Jersey, begins to take some pride in eleven-year-old Eddie Bright. They see in him the sign of genius—the making of an infant prodigy. A possible second Houdini.

Up to a few days ago when, with an older brother, he was arrested in Rutherford for some petty robberies, the town saw him only as an enfant terrible. But twice he has magically caused locked doors to open before him and sought the wide open spaces.

In Rutherford recently he nonchalantly took French leave of the city lockup, strolled about the town, returning in time for dinner and to lock himself into his cell for the night.

Following that episode he was sent to the Children's Home at Hackensack. The other day when his father stepped to the back porch to get the morning's milk he found Eddie curled up on the top step sound asleep. Pa Bright then telephoned Chief of Police Landells, of Lyndhurst, that Eddie was ready to return to Hackensack.

Cheating the Dead

By MONT HURST, JR.

I SHALL never forget the Leveroux case as long as I live. The circumstances surrounding the solution of this case show the keenest kind of thought and deduction I have ever known.

My work as secretary to Howard Elliott, the famous motion picture producer, naturally drew me into the case. I had known Elliott for years. I was first associated with him when we were members of a little tabloid show, playing the smaller cities of the West, and our greatest ambition in those days was to see our names on Broadway.

At a small town in southern California the show property was attached by the sheriff. Our manager disappeared with what few funds remained, leaving the company stranded. Howard Elliott and I rode a freight train into Los Angeles. At this time the motion picture industry was in its infancy. Two or three companies had opened studios in Los Angeles, and we secured work in one of them as extras.

Elliott's rise was spectacular. He worked as leading man, scenario writer, director, and finally secured backing to launch his now great company. He became known as Howard Elliott, the great producer, while I had only attained success in a small way, being known as "plain" Billy Moore, production manager for Elliott's company.

The great success Elliott had made was not gained without making a few enemies. In the motion picture game quick action, rival publicity and the bidding for stars' contracts naturally led to Elliott making a few enemies. Of course, nothing serious had ever come of it, until one day Elliott became involved in an argument with Alfred Leveroux, one of the older producers.

The climax of this bitter enmity was reached when, at a party at the Mathwick Country Club, Elliott and Leveroux came to blows. The men were separated. The final crushing of Alfred Leveroux as a producer came when Elliott outbid him for the contract of Olga Wendel, a famous star. Elliott also won the heart and hand of Miss Wendel, and thus a double blow was dealt Leveroux, who had been madly in love with her.

A month later Leveroux was a bankrupt. He had put his whole fortune into preparations for making a masterpiece starring Olga Wendel. She was in great public favor and her name was a box-office attraction. Losing her services had wrecked Leveroux financially, but losing her hand had made a madman of him.

After this coup of Elliott's, Leveroux retired from the motion picture colony. He went to his country estate up in the valley, and was seldom seen, except at social affairs at the country club.

Rodney Morton's estate adjoined that of Leveroux. He was in the midst of the social whirl, being a director of several banks and the silent partner of Howard Elliott. Just after Lent Morton gave a week-end party. Most all of the movie colony was invited, I among them. Alfred Leveroux was urged to come. Rodney Morton was endeavoring to act as peacemaker between Leveroux and Elliott.

In the ballroom of Morton's house it was noticed that Leveroux seemed morose and very quiet. Rodney Morton came over and gave Leveroux a friendly pat on the shoulder.

"Come, Alfred, forget the past and bury the hatchet. There is no reason why you and Howard Elliott should be on the outs," he said. Then, turning, he called to Elliott to come over.

As Elliott approached he saw Leveroux

and stopped, then shrugged his shoulders and sat down beside Leveroux.

"How are you, Alfred?" he said genially.

"Why should you care?" was Leveroux's surly answer.

"Now you two fellows be good sports and get together. The old saying, 'All's fair in love and war,' still holds good, and it was truly a business war between you two," said Morton.

Leveroux got up and called Elliott to follow. They went out on the lawn, and in a few moments Elliott returned.

"I am going over to Alfred's house a while tonight, Rodney," he said smilingly. "He seemingly wants to be friendly with me, and has a few bottles of real old stuff to sample. I'll see you fellows later," Elliott added as he prepared to leave.

About twelve that night Elliott came in and went directly to his room after calling out a cheery "Good-night" to us. We were up rather late that night, as a poker "tournament" was in progress. It was about two o'clock in the morning before we retired.

The next morning we were awakened by the housekeeper of Leveroux banging on the front door. We dressed hurriedly and rushed downstairs. We opened the door and let her in. She was greatly excited.

"Oh, Mr. Morton! Johnson, the chauffeur, found Mr. Leveroux dead down by the lake. He did not come down this morning, and we started a search for him. A bullet hole was in his head. Oh, sir, it's terrible."

"Come on, fellows, and let's go over. Phone the sheriff and coroner, Hargis," said Morton as we heard the news.

We hurried down to the lake. Johnson had not touched anything. The body of Leveroux was lying between two small willow saplings. Johnson had looked at the body and hurriedly notified the housekeeper. Howard Elliott seemed very nervous.

As we examined the ground about the body we noticed several cigarette butts. Morton picked one up and examined it. Without a word he passed it to me with a look of concern. I looked at the stub and saw the initials of Elliott in gilt letters on one end. I knew he bought special-made cigarettes with his initials on them. It was a known fact to all of us that Leveroux never smoked cigarettes.

Just then Bill Watson, the sheriff, came up. He spoke to each of us and began to examine the body. Of course he picked up the cigarette stubs, and called to Elliott:

"Well, sir, these look like your cigarettes, don't they?"

Elliott said nothing, but slightly nodded his head.

Watson walked down the bank of the lake a few feet. He stopped and picked something out of the water. Then he came back to us, and in his hand he held a wet silk handkerchief. The initials in the corner were "H. W. E." I knew the handkerchief belonged to Howard Elliott. With all this evidence against Elliott I could not bring myself to believe him guilty of the murder of Leveroux.

Bill Watson spoke again:

"Elliott, you are under arrest for the murder of Leveroux. The evidence clearly points to you. I have questioned the housekeeper of Leveroux, and know that you were at his house last night. Every one knows that you and Leveroux were bitter enemies. You will have to go to the district attorney's office with me, where you may be able to arrange bail."

We were stunned by this serious turn of events, although the evidence was strong enough to warrant the arrest of Elliott. The men had been bitter enemies, and Elliott was known to have been at the home of Leveroux. His own initialed cigarette stubs and handkerchief had been found near the body of Leveroux. Things looked black indeed for Howard Elliott. Of course we rallied to him, and assured the prisoner of our support and friendship.

Just as Bill Watson was preparing to take Elliott to town, Don Casper, the scenario writer, spoke up. I had noticed that he seemed to be in a deep study all during the time we were there.

"Wait just a moment, please, Mr. Watson. I think I have this thing solved. Howard Elliott is not guilty. Leveroux committed suicide," said Casper.

"Well, I'll wait just long enough to hear your fairy tale," said Bill Watson with a sneer.

"I believe I can prove my theory to your satisfaction," said Casper. "Do you see that sapling? Well, just look at that small piece of string dangling from the top of it."

We looked at the sapling. It was only about ten feet in height. The body of Leveroux lay at the base of it. At the top of the sapling was a piece of string about three feet in length.

"My theory is this," Casper went on. "Leveroux, seeking revenge on Elliott, and being despondent over his loss of the love of Miss Wendel, devised a plan of revenge. He succeeded in getting possession of a handkerchief and some cigarettes belonging to Elliott. Last night he invited Elliott to his home. After a few rounds of drinks Elliott left.

"After he had gone, Leveroux came down here to the lake with his own revolver. He smoked several of the cigarettes and scattered the stubs about under the sapling. Then he took the handkerchief and tossed it into the water where it would not float away. Next he pulled the sapling over and tied the string to the top of it. He made a loop in the other end of the string and put the butt of the gun in the loop. See the loop in the string? Then, pressing the revolver to his head, he fired.

"As he fell, the sapling, being bent, bounded back upright. Of course the revolver and string fairly flew back into the air with such force that the revolver was hurled from the loop into the water. The sapling acted very much like a slung-shot. Leveroux probably had tested this before and knew just how it would act. We can prove my theory if some one will get a bathing suit and search for the revolver in the lake on a line with the sapling."

We were astounded at this theory. Morton sent Johnson for a bathing suit, and Bill Watson laughed skeptically as he said:

"You won't find anything in the lake but a lot of mud and turtles."

Johnson soon returned with a bathing suit, and Morton put it on. He was carried out into the lake about forty feet from the bank in a canoe. There he began diving for it.

After twenty minutes he arose and in one hand held a revolver. When he came out of the water he handed the revolver to Bill Watson. An examination showed the name of Leveroux on the handle. It was a type of revolver used in the French Army, and it was well known that Leveroux had served under the French flag as a captain.

Bill Watson was dumbfounded. The only thing he could do was release Howard Elliott.

"I guess you ain't guilty, Elliott," he said as he turned to Judge Hare, the coroner, who had just arrived on the scene. After a short examination Judge Hare's verdict was that Alfred Leveroux came to his death by self-destruction.

At the home of Morton we enjoyed a late breakfast. Finally Howard Elliott asked:

"Casper, how did you come to the theory of suicide?"

The writer smiled. We were all waiting to hear his answer.

"The first thing that came to my mind was that you were innocent, Elliott," he said, "and of course I was on the lookout for any possible clues. The first thing I noticed was that piece of looped string dangling from the top of the sapling. A week ago I was strolling along the banks of the lake and observed Leveroux experimenting with the sapling. The string held a rock, and as he bent the sapling over he would let it go, and each time as it bounded up the rock was hurled into the water."

Howard Elliott spoke:

"You certainly have my heartfelt thanks, Casper, and I can't begin to thank you. Things were decidedly against me. I was beginning to think I was in for a trial for murder."

"Oh, there was no danger, Elliott, because I knew you were innocent before we went to the lake. You came in at twelve and I distinctly saw Leveroux leaving his house at two this morning. I sat up all night working on a new photoplay, and as your room is next to mine, you could not have left it without my hearing you."

Hazards in Hate

By DOUGLAS DOLD

I WAS in the drawing-room of Mrs. Elton's boarding-house in Long Island City when young Johnny Taylor rushed into the room, his face ghastly white, and flung himself into an armchair, gasping in a tone of mingled grief and horror:

Chesborough's dead, Medway. Murdered!"

Before I had time to utter a horrified exclamation my partner at chess, Katherine Taylor, John Taylor's sister, and the prettiest girl on the Island, started up, overthrowing the board and crying:

"Philip—dead? Murdered? Oh, John, how—when——"

"I say," protested a voice at the door, the always composed voice of an Englishman, George Parker, who was one of the household, "I wouldn't put it so strong, boy. Mr. Chesborough was not murdered. It was an accident. The police said it was."

"But how—but when?" reiterated Katherine Taylor, now standing pale but composed, except that her voice faltered.

Miss Taylor was engaged to the dead man. Her brother, who had turned toward Parker, now wheeled savagely on her. Philip Chesborough had been young Taylor's best friend. They were ideal comrades—had been for years. His eyes flamed at his sister.

"You just want to know details, eh? You don't scream, or sob, or do any of the natural things which grief or shock bring out in a girl! Details? Well, if you had 'em maybe you *would* do some screaming! Maybe you *would* be human! It's all your fault. All yours! When a girl plays fast and loose with two men something's bound to happen."

"John," I cried sharply, seeing he was beside himself with excitement, "you're half out of your head! You're talking sheer nonsense that none of us can fathom. Be calm; be quiet a moment, and let Parker tell us just what has occurred."

The Englishman, a fellow who had Long Island factory investments, and was over here looking into them, came forward in his well-bred way. With a sympathetic glance at Katherine, he said gently:

"Mr. Taylor and I were just returning from looking over some suburban lots of his, which he thought I might like to purchase. We came on the scene of the accident. Mr. Chesborough was dead when we reached him; had probably been instantly killed when his automobile, which he was probably driving himself, collided with a heavy coal truck which was making a late delivery."

Katherine Taylor sank down on the divan, but I noticed that as she sat there her small and beautiful hands did not tremble, nor did her darkly blue eyes fill with tears, though she remained as white as a sheet.

Few men could be around Miss Taylor long without falling in love with her. Chesborough, however, had apparently succeeded in making her love him. They had been engaged three months.

He was a brilliant, daring lawyer, a friend of the district attorney, a terror to criminals, and had a taste for detective work; he was handsome, and deft in his treatment of women. You'd have thought he would hold Katherine Taylor's attentions easily. But I knew that he had found her feelings wavering, and that her capricious fancy had turned toward his partner, Wesley Lane.

The partner was neither brilliant nor daring. Personally he was an insignificant-looking man with a sandy mustache and hampered by a slight limp. One could not fancy his rivaling as handsome a man as Chesborough had been.

Finding himself in love with Chesborough's fiancée, had he quietly determined to destroy Chesborough?

Nonsense! Chesborough had collided with a coal truck. I put aside the terrible thought of murder, for Parker was going on with his explanations.

"Chesborough," he said gently, "whose body is now in the Belton Hospital, we found lying over the wheel of the car, his hands still clutching it.

"In the tonneau the chaffeur, also dead, had handcuffed himself, evidently at Chesborough's orders, to an unknown man, whom Chesborough had arrested."

"How did you know," I broke in, "that Chesborough had arrested him?"

"The fellow was still living. He had only strength for a few words. He used them to curse Chesborough for the arrest. The chauffeur had been hurled over the side of the car in such a way as to break his neck, poor devil. The car was a mass of wreckage. The wreck was in a little used side street running off Van Alst avenue, so the whole affair wasn't discovered for at least thirty minutes."

"This is all dreadful beyond words," Katherine Taylor gasped in a shaken voice, her face even whiter than before. "But surely, surely it was an accident! In Heaven's name, why should any man purposely collide with poor Philip's car?"

"To get something which Philip had," sneered her brother.

"You mean he was robbed?"

"If there were any papers on him they were taken. But otherwise nothing was touched. He had five hundred dollars in his pocket when found. His gold watch was there. His costly seal ring, his pearl scarf-pin—all were there!"

"Then it *was* an accident. Didn't the police say so?" the girl demanded in a sudden tortured heightening of speech.

"Oh, yes, the police *said* so! An accident, or a drunken coal truck driver! And the truck driver, an insignificant-looking man with a *sandy mustache and a limp,* was certainly found drunk in a Flushing street saloon. But was he drunk when driving? Or did some other man, who resembled him, and was willing to take a mad chance for the sake of the outcome, make him drunk, take his place, and risk the collision?"

Katherine Taylor sprang up, throwing out her hands wildly.

"Stop, brother! It's despicable of you —despicable! You've got to stop these mad insinuations——"

"I'm not hinting at the man who loved Chesborough, but at the man who loved, who still loves and expects to marry, the girl Chesborough was engaged to; the man who hated Chesborough. Look here!" He jerked from his pocket a ball of cream note paper. His quivering fingers clenched on it.

"This is one of Lane's precious compositions to you, Katherine. It says *'God forgive me, I've grown to hate the ground Chesborough walks on, since you admit you love me and yet won't break with him. Now I——'"*

"Give that to me!" screamed Miss Taylor. "You've been reading my letters again! You've no right——"

Her brother jammed the paper back into his pocket.

"I say I've every right. As Dad is dead, and you're only twenty, and he appointed me your guardian, I'll read your letters as often as I think there's need to, believe me! I'm not going to see you wreck your future by tying up with a low-down murderer like Wesley Lane."

"So you've jumped to that conclusion, have you?" a bitter voice demanded on the threshold as Lane himself walked in.

"All of you needn't look at me like that. When I heard of Chesborough's death I heard Taylor had been saying bad things about me. So I hurried over. I've been here long enough to hear Taylor quote exhibit A—my private letter, which proves nothing against me."

"That listens well!" sneered Taylor, fixing him with burning antagonistic eyes.

"But you don't stand any chance of putting one over on us in this business. I've got Detective Oddway on the case already!"

"Oddway!" Lane gasped rather than spoke the famous detective's name. "God, Taylor, you *are* vicious!"

Oddway! The name made my pulses thrill. For I knew Oddway, and he liked and trusted me. He would tell me freely about his progress in the case, because he said it clarified his ideas to talk over his assignments as he worked them out, provided he could talk to some one he trusted.

I will pass over the rest of that painful scene in the parlor. When it was ended the brother and sister were in arms against each other, and Lane, who lived in his own house, had walked out with cold sweat shining faintly on his forehead.

Next morning Detective Oddway arrived at the boarding-house, where room had been found for him.

His eyes, the color of Tasmanic jade, had an odd way of frequently looking down, then suddenly the lids above would fly up, and one met an unwinking, impersonal stare as though one didn't exist.

Oddway was somewhere around thirty or forty years old.

Taylor laid before him what evidence he had collected in the past few hours. The starting lever, missing from Chesborough's wrecked car, had been found among some weeds in the neglected old graveyard close to the street where the wreck occurred. The lever had flown through the air and was driven deep in a new soft grave, made a few hours before. Taylor laid the lever before Oddway. It had Chesborough's car number on it, and was easily identified by Taylor from its peculiar make.

Near by, spiked to the ground by a sliver of heavy glass, was a stained, dirty handkerchief, knotted, but torn in two on the unknotted portion. This handkerchief Taylor found directly under the front axle of Chesborough's wrecked car. The police said it had been dropped or thrown there by some passer-by before the wreck occurred.

Questioned as to what wheel marks Taylor had seen in the earth-bottomed street, he answered that the tracks of the colliding coal car swerved directly toward those of Chesborough's machine. The latter was driving in a straight line, but the truck driver had swerved out of his legitimate route straight into Chesborough's path.

That the only other noticeable track was made by a car with a patched shoe. Young Taylor rather shamefacedly showed a drawing he had made of the patch impression; but Detective Oddway's face lighted as he took it, saying eagerly:

"Mr. Taylor, you are thoughtful far beyond the average; you actually realize the awful way in which Life hangs some of her greatest results on little things."

There ensued a strange week at the boarding-house, a week in which Katherine Taylor came and went with white, set face, hard, angry eyes and not one sign of mourning for the man now under the cemetery sod.

That fear which Lane felt I saw plainly exemplified when Oddway asked me to take him over to Lane's house and introduce him. The detective could easily have introduced himself, but he had a theory that the presence of an outsider helped him in watching the suspect.

At Lane's door his working housekeeper, a huge, masculine-looking woman, met us, recognized Oddway, bristled at sight of him, and rasped out that Mr. Lane wasn't in.

"But I happen to know that he is in," Oddway said quietly, "just as I know what your record on Blackwell's Island was."

She turned white. Just then Lane himself came down into the hall. It was about half-past nine o'clock. He had his younger brother with him, a surly lad of twenty, sullen-eyed and now wrestling with the miseries of his first business position.

I had heard unpleasant tales of this youth, and of the black spots in his career which would have justified Lane in sending him away.

And the housekeeper, mannishly built, with that anxious look in her yellow eyes, what sort of possibilities lay in her? Why had she wanted to keep Oddway out? Be-

cause of her own past history, or because she knew something of Lane's part in Chesborough's terrible death?

I introduced Oddway. The man met him ungraciously, and Lane refused to come into the house for any conversation until he had seen his mechanician, James Mills, in the garage, about some repairs he was going to make on Lane's car. Oddway merely asked if we could go with them. To this Lane again ungraciously assented. Judging by his half-concealed fear of Oddway, he would have refused outright.

At the garage the mechanician proved a bright-faced, civil man, medium-sized, agile as a cat in every movement, with shiny black hair and a thick black mustache. He was a relief after the surly atmosphere of the others, but he didn't seem to interest Oddway, who was restless and anxious to get back to the house, moving impatiently here and there.

Lane made this man an excuse for delaying as long as possible, even leading us upstairs where the mechanician had a tidy little room over the garage. But finally Lane had to return to his dwelling. When Oddway, inside the little living-room, frankly asked permission to examine the place alone, Lane gazed at him bitterly.

"You mean that you want to dig up imaginary clues against me?"

"If you are guiltless, you needn't fear imaginary clues."

"Rot!" Lane sneered roughly. "I know your kind. It's not justice you're after, but it's adding to your own repute for brilliancy. Nose over my house if you want to. I frankly admit I permit it only because if I refuse you'll discover queer footprints outside my gate, or God knows what other malignant nonsense."

Oddway looked at him coldly, quietly. Lane whitened under that gaze. His glance fell.

The search the officer made was so exhaustive that I grew dead tired of the whole thing. How could he hope for clues when Lane was keenly on his guard?

I kept wondering if Lane knew his housekeeper was an ex-convict. If he did know, what were his motives in keeping her?

Her room came in for its share of attention. It was a disorderly place. She evidently put out all her energy on the other parts of the house. Her fireplace, her waste-basket, were littered with débris, through every scrap of which Oddway went, with the door locked against her.

Out of her varied trash he salvaged some fragments of a photograph and laid them before me. They showed only an arm and hand, a clean-shaven mouth, part of one eye. On the back was a blurred word, "forever."

"What do you make of this?"

I shook my head.

"Nothing."

He grinned dryly.

"One of those imaginary clues of which Mr. Lane spoke, eh? Well, we shall see!"

He threw the scraps back into the fireplace and showed me nothing more, though in Lane's bedroom all of Lane's suits went under his magnifying-glass.

It was nearly midnight when we left our sullen host. There was still a light burning in the garage.

"Lane must be going out in his car," I muttered, "or the man works overtime for him."

"I think it is 'overtime' he works," Oddway said absently.

Two days later the detective summoned the Taylors, Parker and myself to his own room. He did not ask us to sit down, but for a moment stared slowly at us, as though thinking of some scene yet to be enacted. Then he said quietly:

"Mr. Taylor, I am about to clear up the matter given into my hands. I'm about to put my hand on the guilty human being and say, 'In the name of the law, you are under arrest for the death of Chesborough.' You were right in saying it was no accident."

Katherine Taylor started forward, exclaiming passionately, wildly:

"Mr. Oddway, if you have scraped up a lot of meaningless things, and given them meaning—merely that you——"

He smiled grimly, as he interrupted.

"Your opinion of detectives coincides

with that of Mr. Lane. Just for that reason I would like to have you come with your brother, Mr. Medway, Mr. Parker and myself to Mr. Lane's house, where Mr. Lane has agreed to admit us and hear the truth rather than hear it in court. We cannot talk here. A boarding-house is subject to too many sensational entrances from the curious. Miss Taylor, will you go with us?"

"Go—oh, yes! Yes! Oh, my God—if you have anything apparently against Mr. Lane it is all my fault."

"Stop!" Oddway cut in like steel. "Do not accuse yourself to save your lover. Come!"

Once more I found myself in Lane's living-room. Not only Lane eyed our entering group, his household was there as well—by Oddway's desire.

When all were assembled the detective said in a steady, cold voice:

"My friends, suspicion rests on this house. So it's best that every inmate should hear all I have to say, just as it's also fair that those suspecting, and those most anxious, should be here, too. All of you find chairs, please, if Mr. Lane will forgive my playing host, *pro tem.*"

"Don't keep us waiting," said Taylor.

"I've no desire to," Oddway said dryly. "Perhaps we'd best first take the case of the automobile starting lever. Thank heaven, you did not clean it, Mr. Taylor. Microscopic examination showed that the dirt concealed new blood and several hairs. In a word, the hairs matched the head of the dead prisoner, and the lever fitted, at its heavy butt, the ghastly depression in the dead prisoner's head. The lever, in short, gave the blow which settled the prisoner, who was probably only slightly injured."

Taylor drew a sharp breath.

"Killed because he would have told tales on Chesborough's partner!" he cried stormily, his angry eyes on Lane. "Look, Oddway, it's patent! Lane killed this prisoner, who saw too much! Who——"

"I'll not stand for this!" Lane gasped; but his mouth was dry, and he could barely articulate. He started up. With difficulty the detective quieted and silenced both of them; though nothing could present the awful sense of tense and dreadful expectancy that was steadily growing in the room.

Oddway went on swiftly:

"Taylor, put your thoughts on that patched automobile shoe—you remember your drawing? I set twenty agents at work tracing it. I"—he hesitated, and then said coldly—"that patch trail led straight into Mr. Lane's private garage, and the patch proved to belong to an old Mercedes he had stored there, and which he swears he never used. And yet I got testimony from three men that they had seen Lane in this old car, driving it at night."

"You see!" young Taylor exulted at Lane. The latter shivered and made no reply; he seemed unable to speak. Then Oddway continued:

"A thorough examination of the handkerchief in the case, the one you found spiked by the glass, Taylor, showed me several things overlooked by our excellent police. The handkerchief was knotted. It had certainly been tied around *something.* Measurements, very exactly made, showed that whatever it had been tied around *precisely matched in circumference the front axle of Chesborough's car*——"

"Why, but such a thing had no reason—no——" Katherine Taylor began.

"Excuse me—a very potent reason! If I planned to collide with a certain man's car, *I would certainly try to have a white handkerchief tied on the front axle of his car unknown to the owner.* It would assure me I was colliding with the right car!"

A sharp intake of breath from Lane as Oddway continued:

"Supposing the handkerchief was tied there, it would have stayed there; but when the coal truck smashed into the front of Chesborough's car it sent shivering downwards a mass of indriven under-driven keen-edged glass splinters. One of these cut loose the handkerchief, driving right through the very tiny monogram embroidered on it. Only one letter did I resurrect with infinite care. That letter——"

"Was 'L,' I know," thrust in Taylor.

"Unfortunately for Mr. Chesborough's partner—yes!"

"And remember," young Taylor stabbed in, "the truck was driven by a man who 'strikingly resembled' Mr. Lane. So here's ample material for an arrest."

"Damn you!" Lane burst out frantically, with blazing eyes. "If you try to arrest me —to——"

"Keep your threats until I serve a warrant on you," exclaimed the detective. "You can use your eloquence then. Let me go on. I had already searched Mr. Chesborough's private desk. I found him to have been a much threatened man. Among the threatening evidence was a note whose handwriting corresponded to a written word, found in Mr. Lane's house. That word was 'forever.'"

Miss Taylor cast an agonized glance at Lane.

"'Forever' on the back of a photograph usually goes with the word love," Oddway went on quietly. "And this particular 'forever' was back of a clean-shaven pictured mouth—which I recognized instantly. Back of a hand I recognized, too. The photograph was in fragments. Now, why was this picture destroyed?"

I tried to recall the photographed mouth as I stared at Lane's visibly trembling lips. I couldn't. Oddway resumed:

"Now I had connecting links, a note in 'Forever's' handwriting, warning Chesborough he would be killed if he tried further to run down the gang which had cut off the lights in a certain section of a New Jersey town. This gang had looted the said section comfortably while the place was in darkness. I figured that if 'Forever,' with his handwriting on this note and on this photograph, was to be found, he would be at his old trick of darkening a section of some place before he looted it. Therefore, 'Forever' would be found in a gas plant, and his clothes would show coal tar stains. The other night in the garage I saw and recognized coal-tar stains—not only on several rags about the place, but on a handkerchief which I somewhat feloniously lifted from 'Forever's' pocket—'Forever,' whose mouth no false mustache could hide from me. I found coal-tar stains exactly similar to the coal tar stains on the handkerchief tied to the unhappy Chesborough's front axle. Those handkerchiefs matched in texturre, also the tiny embroidered 'L.'"

"The handkerchief I took from 'Forever's' pocket he stole—just as the handkerchief tied on the axle was stolen. 'Forever'—who worked 'overtime' for his too confiding employer—Mr. Lane—'Forever' is 'Midnight Joe!'"

The chauffeur shot to his feet.

"Pickin' on me, are you?" he shouted, his eyes gleaming wildly, dangerously. "Turned on me, like you damned sleuths always does when you gotter 'get' somebody!"

"Sit down!" thundered Oddway. "There are two plainclothesmen outside waiting for you to make trouble."

The man very, very slowly sat down, in the hesitant quietude of a leopard half-minded to spring.

"Mr. Lane," Oddway said rapidly, "a detective has to consider not merely the people who *look* alike, but the real trailer considers the people *who could be made to look alike* by artifice. Scarcely had my eyes rested on the so-called Mills when I realized that I could easily make him seem Mr. Lane's double."

He wheeled on Mills.

"Now, friend, I find no man ever had a better chance to occasionally borrow his employer's clothes than you!"

"But I never touched——"

"And when you wore his clothes you didn't wear your nice little black false mustache, nor your own black hair. You replaced your black mustache with a sandy one. Your hair you covered with a sandy brown wig. Your agile right ankle ceased to be agile, it limped—as long as you wanted it to."

The great, masculine-looking cook-woman hit her chair arm a resounding slap that made half of us jump.

"Is this right?" she barked. "Is all this here 'phony' talk true, I ask you?"

"The night you drove in Mr. Lane's clothes on that coal truck you got coal stains on his suit," Oddway continued to Mills, utterly ignoring her. "Had these coal smudges been alone, they would have been evidence against Lane; but mingled on this

suit were coal tar stains from your quarters so small they escaped your notice."

"I tell you——" the chauffeur interrupted.

"Some man who had access to Lane's rooms," Oddway went on, "read Lane's correspondence. In the guise of Wesley Lane he killed Chesborough, whom he *knew* Lane hated. That was you, Mills, alias 'Midnight Joe.'"

"You lie!" yelled Mills. "I got too much brains to risk my neck on a collision. I——"

"There was no risk. You hoped to kill not only Mr. Chesborough, but his prisoner, "Austrain Jim," whom you got word was going to squeal about your robberies. I learned at headquarters that 'Austrian Jim' had been threatened by you. When you found the poor devil Jim wasn't dead you almost finished him with the starting lever."

The housekeeper started violently. Her mouth worked strangely. She turned a searching glance on Oddway.

"Your kind never forgives an intention to squeal"—the detective went rapidly on—"and——"

He was interrupted, for a dreadful change now surged over the housekeeper. She turned on Mills.

"What's this?" she screamed. "*You* killed my Jim? My boy—my boy that you trained yourself as a crook?"

The chauffeur tried to stop her. Now I understood why Oddway had her there. Mills might as well have tried to silence a tornado. She screamed:

"You killed him and, after that, you went on pretending to love me—had me protecting you every way I could. I even tore up your picture, thinkin' it might do harm, and now—— Oh, God, it was my son's blood you had on you that night of the accident. You *did* kill him—and came home and kissed me. Oh, you Judas! Take that!"

It was over in a second. There was dread fear on Mills's face as this creature, robbed of her young, fooled in her love, sprang at him. She was as strong as a man, agile and insane with outraged maternity. A knife she gripped sank in him to the hilt before we could seize her, and when we finally held her Mills, with a heavy groan, sank to the floor.

"I'm done for," he gasped. "Damn that woman! I done right to kill that boy, the dirty young whelp! And I was good to Sal—now she's double-crossed me, too." He laughed, a faint, sinking cackle. "Anyway, I'm takin' a few with me—Chesborough, the chauffeur, Jim—I put 'em all outer business, and you, too, Sal—when you swing for this."

An hour later most of us were back in the boarding-house, and Taylor was saying humbly to Lane:

"You had a hard deal from me, but I loved Chesborough. And, honestly, I couldn't understand Katherine turning from him to you."

"Neither did I understand," Lane said gently. "Chesborough was gifted, handsome."

"Ah, but he wasn't you," Katherine breathed with trembling lips, "and when John gets to really know you, Wesley, he'll understand your merits."

"I understand he is an innocent man whom I might have ruined," young Taylor answered regretfully. "Of course he will never be friendly toward me now."

A sudden, wonderful illumination came over Lane's insignificant face, transforming the man. Swiftly he held out his hand.

"I am friendly now," he said earnestly, adding as they shook hands, then moved apart again: "You won't forbid me Katherine hereafter? Some day you may find that we have no power over love. We've got to go where it leads."

"Take her," said Taylor. But turning away he sighed, and I knew that by him at least the dead Chesborough would never be forgotten.

Sentence of Death

By HAMILTON CRAIGIE

CHAPTER ONE

AT the edge of the clearing the big man with the unkempt, bristly beard paused, peering through the underbrush outward toward the level flat to the river sparkling in the bright morning sun.

It was a curious place, set in a wilderness of scrub pine and palmetto—a barren desolation stretching outward and away to the distant dull roar of the breakers, seaward, a long mile to the south.

And somewhere across the sand-dunes and the river was the man whom he had followed half-way around the world; the man whom he had sworn to get if it took him a lifetime of searching—and now, as he had reason to believe, he was at the end of the trail.

Jethro Carpenter raised his bullet head with its stiff fell of pig's-bristles, his hard mouth twisted sidewise in a sullen pout. He and the man whom he sought, Black Jarvis Pendleton, had been partners in the highways and byways of the world—with their hands against every man. They had been partners in one astounding crooked game which had netted them a cool half million in cash and negotiable bonds. The two crooks looked enough alike to have been twins born of the same mother, although they were not related.

Carpenter's share had been the half of the loot, of course, but he had put his trust in Black Jarvis, his counterpart, once too often. That had been a long year in the past. And now, trailing him twice ten thousand weary miles, the hound, it appeared, had found the fox.

In the little Florida town Carpenter's inquiries had been guarded; to his description of Pendleton the natives had returned the information that a man looking exactly like himself had indeed been seen—they had seen him, certainly—but he had been met with a curious reticence regarding Pendleton's location, which had ended in a blank wall of silence, impenetrable as stone.

"Out there," they had vaguely told him, as they pointed to the desert, "you'll find him—out—beyond. It's all of ten miles, mister, but we-uns don't never go no furder'n here."

Twice or thrice in his slow journey southward among the sand dunes Carpenter had been aware of a sudden, glinting flash, low down to seaward. It had been like the distant signals of heliographs—or the quick dazzle of the sunlight upon rifle barrels. The man that he sought, as he was convinced, was somewhere just ahead, in the wilderness of sand and stunted pine. No one else could have answered to the description he had been given save Black Jarvis Pendleton, but the nods and the winks with which his question had been received remained with him now as he went forward across a barren waste, ending in a long, wooded bench.

As he recalled it, there had been a queer half-crazy look in the eyes of the "Cracker" who had answered him; a furtive down-glance of the shoe-button eyes, secret and sly—a knowing, enigmatic glance as if, with his tongue in his cheek, his informant had been enjoying some dim, obscure jest of which he, Carpenter, might be the butt.

He had reached the timber when, faint and far, there came the distant echo of a gun-shot, like the breaking of a stick. Just ahead the sand-dunes opened up, so that, of a sudden, like figures in a dream, he saw a running figure like a toy in the dis-

tance. Behind it were others, and from these others, even as he looked, there came the rolling rattle of gun-fire.

Around and about that infinitesimal running figure, ahead, and upon either side, the sand was spurting upward now in feathery jets, and there came a yelling chorus as of hounds who bay the death of the quarry. And then, although they seemed to move no faster than the minute-hand of a watch, the foremost figure abruptly stiffened, like a marionette jerked backward at the urgency of an invisible wire. He swayed and fell forward, as the watcher in the timber crouched, silent, in his covert.

After a little, peering cautiously outward across the sand, Carpenter went on again until, from the flat shoulder of a little hill, he paused once more to reconnoiter.

Ahead of him the dunes seemed empty of all life under the mid-afternoon sun, but farther on, where the jungle growth closed in like a wall, he could see, through his binoculars, what seemed to be a gate, flanked by a bristling, impenetrable hedge of hornbeam.

Finger on the trigger of his pistol, he stood for a moment straining his gaze against that velvet green, but there came no sound, no sign. The sun, blazing from the high arch of heaven, showed him merely the sand, the trees, a bird soaring silent against the blue.

But somewhere, just ahead, was Black Jarvis Pendleton.

Striding forward, he had passed through the gate, his finger still upon the trigger of his pistol, eyes about him all ways at once, but there was none to stay his progress. As he passed through the gate with the green gloom of the trees making a checkerboard of light and shade, a cry sounded from somewhere at his back. It had seemed to voice a warning, a summons, a command. But he paid it no heed, marching onward through a twilight gloom that was funereal, chill with a dank coolness even at high noon. And through this dim aisle, as through a long tunnel, he beheld on a sudden, black against the sunlight, a hut.

It stood alone on a little rising ground, solitary, forbidding. But Jethro Carpenter took little account of that, nor was there any way by which he could have known that beyond it there were others, in a far-flung cordon, to right and left.

Once or twice he fancied that the cry he had heard was repeated, and with it a rustle, a movement, in the green wall. Whirling, gun out, he turned backward to see—just nothing, save the dim track along which he had come, the tall trees of eucalyptus, palmetto, the segment of pale sky that was like a vault bounding this strange and curious terrain.

Jethro Carpenter was not an imaginative man, but the silence of the forest oppressed him. All at once it appeared alive with motion. Before him and behind, with the faint, half-audible footfall of some vagrant denizen of the wild, sounded the muted murmur of the wind, like a great river flowing above the cathedral quiet of that dim forest aisle.

Fire-tried and tested in the crucible of adventure, he was conscious of a feeling, a premonition, a thin, entering wedge of doubt, which, as he went forward to the hut, prickled the short hairs at the base of his neck with a crawling fear.

But—what was there to fear?

From the shelter of a tree-bole he surveyed the shack, and then abruptly he froze rigid, with a hissing intake of his breath.

A man had stepped suddenly into the sunlight, a big man. Simian in his suggestion of the brute. Even at that distance Carpenter could see that his face was of a curious, dead whiteness, like the belly of a snake; otherwise he was black—black with the blackness as to hair and beard that had given him his name, the great hands covered with a stiff fell of hair, the eyes small, porcine, under pent-house brows.

And standing there, save for the dirty white cotton shirt and the filthy dungarees, it was as if Jethro Carpenter was looking in a mirror, for, even to the black beard, the bullet-head, the great, sloping shoulders, with their long ropes of muscles, the man upon whom he gazed might have been himself.

Captenter's voice sounded with a sort of whistling croak.

"Black Jarvis!" he exclaimed.

He made one forward, lurching step, the veins in his neck and temples gorged with high blood pressure. Then he halted abruptly in mid-stride, facing the man he hated and had sworn to kill.

CHAPTER TWO

BLACK JARVIS had neither heard nor seen Carpenter. Turning, he re-entered the shack, moving with a curious shambling shuffle as Carpenter, pocketing his pistol, went forward noiselessly.

It was something of a riddle, and a riddle to which he had not the key, although the hopeless, dull staring in the eyes of his enemy might have explained it. Here, in this wilderness of pine and palm, Black Jarvis Pendleton had evidently chosen to bury himself away from the vengeance which he knew had followed upon his heels half-way across the world. That, possibly, would be the reason. It had been by the merest chance that Jethro Carpenter had come upon his quarry. In a low dive on the New Orleans water-front he had met a man who had mentioned casually that he had seen Black Jarvis at Bocagrande. Afterward, cruising in a motor-boat among the Ten Thousand Isles, the trail had led eastward to the mainland, and Lake Okeechobee. Carpenter had followed it until in this wilderness of sand and sage he had at last found him whom he sought.

Black Jarvis, seated in a chair, lifted dull eyes to the man facing him across the battered surface of the table. Jaw slack, he stared at the long blade in the hand of Carpenter, where, along the edge, it was stained and discolored, but not from rust. His voice when he spoke was husky, asthmatic, guttural.

"Oh—hello, Jethro!" he said coolly.

The man who had pursued his enemy across the world leaned forward. What wonder he might have felt dissolved in a red rage as he spoke out of the corner of his mouth, in the prison twist:

"I've found you, you double-crossing dog!" He bit off the words with a sort of singing violence. "The jack, ha? What've you done with that? You won't tell, eh? You dumb fool! But I'll find it—after you're gone!"

He had come in like a sliding ghost, for all his bulk. Now the heavy knife, in the great, hairy, freckled fingers, quivered, the razor steel level with Black Jarvis's heart.

But if he expected the giant to blanch, to beg cravenly for his life, Carpenter was disappointed. He knew Black Jarvis was a coward, but in the dull eyes raised to his he read merely a stupid acquiescence, almost as if the man before him had been drugged; that might explain it.

But it was not that altogether, for the eyes, dull, glazed, like those of an animal, stared straight before him in a kind of sightless stare, the hands like stone mauls upon the table-top, the great, bowed shoulders hunched forward, bent as if beneath a heavy weight.

Carpenter snarled like an animal, the knife held level with his enemy's great barrel of a chest.

"You double-crossing dog!" he repeated. "You're going to get yours—because I'm judge and jury, and you've been sentenced"—his laugh came with a low, bitter note—"and this time it's a sentence of death!"

At the words Black Jarvis raised his arms, and Carpenter could see that they were like those of a leper: scarred and scabbed with late-healed cicatrices, and pocked blue with powder-burns. Into the eyes of the giant in his chair there seemed to grow a pin-point of pale flame, deep down, like a still fire, the mouth twisted abruptly sidewise in a mocking leer, as he mumbled:

"I could tell you a lot, Jethro, but you wouldn't believe me even if I did. Well, no matter. You always were a credulous, believing fool, weren't you, Jethro? But I spent that money, and I sure hit the high spots while she lasted, and you can lay to that! Now—you can go to hell!"

Carpenter's face was bloated and deathly white. Rage seized upon him so that he

trembled, else he might have read in those mocking eyes a message, a warning. The hand holding the knife thrust forward with the speed of light. There followed a choked gurgle, a gasping sigh. Black Jarvis Pendleton had gone to his account.

And although he did not know it, Jethro Carpenter had executed the death sentence upon himself.

CHAPTER THREE

THE murderer had depended upon his knife rather than his pistol. He held it to be the safer way, even in this wilderness of silence. Now, with the dead man lolling grotesquely in his chair, he searched that shack from side to side and end to end, but he found nothing; anyway, there was no place really where Pendleton's money might have been concealed.

And as he searched he became aware, little by little, of a curious fancy: the dead man seemed to be looking at him. He could feel those cold eyes boring into his back with a chill malevolence, the sardonic flicker of a mordant mirth that, as he bent over the pallet in the corner, brought him abruptly to the right-about.

But Black Jarvis Pendleton was dead, and his secret with him, if he had had a secret about the location of his hoard.

At length, desisting from his useless searching, Carpenter, rising from his knees, approached the body where it sat, slumped downward in the chair. Working in clumsy haste, he took from it the cheap cotton shirt and the dungarees, arrayed in which he stood forth a perfect replica of the man whom he had killed, even to the eyes.

But now he would make assurance doubly sure. He was unacquainted with the country; it was a barren tract save for the dust-brown "village" ten miles to the westward, the half-dozen inhabitants of which were morons, half-wits. From them he was convinced he had nothing to fear.

But the memory of the drama that he had witnessed out there in the sand—that distant killing, in which pursuer and pursued had seemed like figures in a dream—remained with him. Shouldering the limp body of the dead, he staggered outward through the door.

There was a lime-pit just behind the cabin; he had noticed it earlier from his covert among the trees. Why it was there he had not paused to question, or if he had it would have given him no concern. The shirt and the dungarees were faded, bleached to a nondescript monotone of dirty drab; but they fitted him. Appareled thus, he was the image of Black Jarvis Pendleton—with none to say him nay. When the clothes had been new, however, they had been neither dirty nor bleached. But the murderer was not thinking of that.

There, under a sky that was like a sheet of hammered brass, with none for a witness, the burial had become an accomplished fact. Into that cauldron that boiled and bubbled with a white, viscid froth he had bestowed his enemy. He was free. His vengeance had been consummated. The sentence had been carried out. In no time at all the body of him who had been Black Jarvis Pendleton would disappear forever from the sight of men.

Turning without a parting glance the man strode backward along the trail by which he had come. He was safe. In a very little while now he would be gone from the place of shadows and stinking heat; back to the life that was calling to him from New Orleans, where a man's time was his own, to do with it as he pleased.

The dead man had chosen to bury himself; indeed, and at the last that was what had happened to him. A little wind, pattering in the dust like the feet of an invisible army, followed Carpenter upon his way.

From somewhere far ahead he began to hear a shouting, faint and far; it came and went in a confused murmur. There seemed a savage note of menace in it, riding the wind, and after a little there came the distant echo of a gunshot rolling upward against the low-hung curtain of the sky.

These sounds drew nearer, receded, and came again, as a door is opened and shut upon noises from without. The murderer,

halting in the shadow of the gateway, felt for the pistol in his pocket.

But what was there to fear?

He stepped out with free, careless stride, and a shadow bulked suddenly between him and the light, a shadow with hard eyes and a grim, unsmiling mouth. As in a mist the murderer beheld his nemesis. Then, crystal-clear, he saw the campaign hat, the bandolier, thick-studded with cartridges; the short, murderous carbine leveled at his heart, and from what seemed dim leagues of distance, he heard a voice:

"That's it—put 'em up, an' keep 'em that way. *Now!*"

Some way, somehow, they had found him out. He read it in the cold glance of the man who faced him—a sheriff, by his dress. He was trapped.

CHAPTER FOUR

IN some way that killing, and the burial thereof, secret and grim, had been discovered. Carpenter felt that he was lost.

But even as he stood there in white-lipped silence, the realization of the truth—the truth that was a worse thing than death—came to him with the words of his captor, grim, matter-of-fact:

"Easy does it, convict No. 23! And you might say you're lucky, because you saw what happened to No. 36! He tried the getaway once too often. But, anyway, it'll be yours for the rock-pile in the morning, Black Jarvis Pendleton. Now—march!"

With the muzzle of the carbine boring into his back, Jethro Carpenter raised his voice in a frenzy of protestations:

"I did it!" he cried. "I'm not Black Jarvis—my name is Carpenter. I knifed him, I tell you! He double-crossed me. I killed him—back there in the hut; he had it coming, and now he's dead."

"Crazy as a coot!" his captor muttered. Then, with a sudden gesture, thrusting a hand inside the ragged shirt, he drew forth a pistol.

"Tell it to Sweeney!" he said harshly. And Jethro Carpenter, eyes set straight before him in a stony stare, moved stiffly away.

In the guard-house of the convict camp the guard who had halted the murderer upon the threshold of freedom held up his weapon to the light; it was a German automatic.

"Plumb loco—that No. 23!" he said, turning to the commandant in the doorway. "He's in for life, sir, as you know; he goes on the rock-pile in the morning. He was armed, and attempting to escape, of course."

His eyes narrowed to a speculative, slow stare.

"But I wonder where he got that pistol?" he mused. "There isn't one like it in a hundred miles. He didn't bring it with him, sir, do you think?"

"He couldn't have," the commandant made answer, with a slow head-shake. "But we need two or three more guards. And that gate—we'll seal that in the morning. You know, it's only our third day in camp, away from the Pen, and I'll feel better when we're back again behind four walls. Well, these 'cons'—they're a bad lot, Martin, and you can lay to that! And that fellow Black Jarvis—you're lucky he didn't see you *first!*"

On the morning of a day in which the past was but a memory, the future barren as a rainy sea, Jethro Carpenter, alone upon a rock-pile under the blazing sun, was beginning the first hour of his sentence, the living death which, with the unconscious connivance of the dead man, he had executed upon himself.

For him he had released from bondage, and by the selfsame stroke he forged the fetters of his own fate.

Kismet!

The Point of Intersection

By CHARLES M. GREEN

MY interview with Talton Burke, the detective, was the turning point of my newspaper career. The interview, standing by itself, was important enough to raise me in the estimation of the the editor of the *Chronicle*; but the solution of the Hill diamond robbery, which came as a sequence, gave me a scoop over every star reporter in the city, and was the talk of the town for weeks.

"How did you acquire your keen analytical mind," I asked when I met him in his office.

Burke smiled.

"Well, conceding for the sake of the argument that I have what you are pleased to term a 'keen analytical mind,' I acquired it just as everything else in the world is acquired—by hard work. For years I made it a practice, at least once a day, to enter a room, remain ten or twenty seconds, fastening in my mind every detail, every piece of furniture, every figure in that room, then to retire to my study and try to reconstruct the scene in that room and to place every figure. By that I mean to deduct the business of the occupants of that room and their relations to each other simply by their attitudes and facial expressions.

"At first it seemed an uphill job, but I felt it could be mastered and I stayed with it. Later I managed to observe certain rules which were fundamental, and then I commenced to acquire some proficiency.

"All there is to the detection of crime is to make observations correctly. Each clue, properly interpreted, is a straight line pointing to the solution. Of course, this line is like another straight line; not only does it point to the solution, but it points to a great many things on both sides of the solution. But give one a second clue, interpret it correctly, and all that is necessary is to follow both lines to their points of intersection, and there we have the solution.

"You will understand that there is a world of meaning in the words 'interpreted correctly.' Many clues are improperly interpreted. One must be sure that his compass is accurate before he can start to survey."

"How about a case where there are no clues?" I countered.

"There are no such cases," retorted Burke. "In some cases we do not find the clues, in others we do not recognize them when we do find them, and in still others we fail to interpret them correctly. But in all cases there are clues. It is also very seldom that a case exists in which those clues are not found.

"It is that which makes possible the profession which I have chosen. Nearly always I find the police are in possession of enough clues to effect a solution if properly interpreted. In fact, on the theory of intersecting lines, it is only necessary to have *two* clues and to interpret them correctly. Usually they have a dozen or more; some fragmentary, some distorted, but nearly always there are four or five which point unmistakably to the criminal. The trouble is to recognize these accurate clues and to run an accurate mental survey to determine the point of intersection.

"There is where I come in. I don't find clues, I interpret them. I take the clues the police are able to present, look for a point of intersection, and in a surprising number of instances am able to effect a solution."

He was interrupted by the phone bell ringing. Excusing himself, Burke took up the telephone, consulted his watch and told

the party to come right up. Turning to me, he said:

"Look here; you have done me a good turn in the past; probably you don't realize just how good a turn it was. I am anxious to reciprocate by every means in my power, and I know that a good story means a lot to you newspaper men. Now the Hill diamond case is one of the most interesting in the city at the present time. I have no doubt that your newspaper has one or two of its best men assigned to the case exclusively.

"I have been requested by the insurance company to sit in on a conference with Captain of Detectives Park, the detective representing the insurance company and the owner of the diamonds. They are on their way up here now. There is every chance that a good story may break within the next hour, and there is also a chance that developments will not reach such a point that they can be released for publication. If you will give me your promise not to publish anything which has not been first submitted to me for my O. K., I will be glad to have you sit in the room during the interview posing as my secretary. Will you promise?"

Would I promise? It was a scoop to hear the story of Hill, the owner of the diamonds, who had steadfastly refused to talk to any newspaper men or make any statement for publication. If by any chance anything should develop at the interview it would make my reputation as a reporter. The *Chronicle* had its two best men working on the case, and so far they had been unable to even get an interview with Hill. It looked like a scoop of the first magnitude, and I promised quickly, vehemently and eagerly.

Burke laughed at my eagerness, a quick, jovial laugh of human companionship.

"All right," he continued, "just go over to that desk and sit at the typewriter as though you were getting ready to do some writing or waiting for me to give you some dictation. These men will accept you, as a matter of course, as my secretary, and I don't want to have to lie about it. But remember, not one word for publication unless I give you a release."

I hastily settled myself at the desk, opened my notes and immediately started to type the first draft of my interview with Burke. I was, therefore, busily engaged on the typewriter when, after a formal ring, there entered three men whom I instantly placed as Captain of Detectives Park, whom I had seen before; Mr. O. A. Hill, the owner of the diamonds, and the other, a short, dark man who must be the detective employed by the insurance company.

I stopped typewriting and began searching through my notes, as though entirely oblivious of my surroundings, and the men, after a casual glance in my direction, proceeded to the business of the meeting.

Burke greeted them all, including Hill, with a cordial handshake. He had, of course, been intimately associated for years with Captain Park, and it was to be expected he would know the dark, surly detective; but Hill was a social butterfly, and I was somewhat surprised to see that Burke had met him previously.

"Be seated, gentlemen," said Burke, "and let's get to business, as I have another appointment before dinner. Park, you are more familiar with the facts than any one else because you have had a large force at work on the matter collecting evidence. I know, in a general way, that Mr. Hill and his wife, in the presence of another couple, were held up in an auto a week or so ago, and that the famous diamond necklace which has been in the Hill family for years was stolen, together with some other jewelry. Please give me the details as you have them."

Captain Park drew a notebook from his pocket and proceeded:

"On the 24th of July Mr. and Mrs. Hill were on their way to the theater with Mr. and Mrs. Mandeville. The latter couple, by the way, were spending the week-end as house guests of the Hills. Mrs. Mandeville had mentioned a motion picture which was causing considerable comment and the decision was reached to spend the evening at this show. Mr. Hill ordered his chauffeur to bring up the car, and they started, taking a short-cut through the park.

"They were about half-way through the

park when they noticed a car with lights out parked close to the curb. As they drove up to this strange car two men jumped aboard the Hill auto, one getting in front next to the chauffeur and the other getting in the rear. Both men had revolvers, and one of them forced the driver to the curb, while the other demanded the 'Hill necklace,' taking it and also some very valuable jewelry from Mrs. Mandeville. Mr. Hill was relieved of some cash and his watch, while Mr. Mandeville seems to have been more fortunate. Some money was taken from him, but his watch and a large sum of money in bills were overlooked. The crooks got away in the parked car.

"The police were immediately notified, but so far there have been virtually no clues of importance. We have searched all pawnshops, and have also covered some of the jewelry stores which we suspect of being conducted as 'fences.' It is, of course, the theory that the stones will be taken from their settings and sold piecemeal.

"While it was an 'outside' job, we have, nevertheless, completely covered every angle. The house servants seem to be all right, with the exception of Higgins, the butler, who has a criminal record of a term in the penitentiary. He seems to have reformed on his discharge from prison, and is spoken of very highly by Mr. Hill. The maid has been with them a year, and has good references. The chauffeur, who has been in his present employment only a few weeks, seems to be sort of a ne'er-do-well and, while he has never been convicted of a felony, he has been in several scrapes, and Mr. Hill suspects him of some small dishonesties in connection with purchases for the car. Hill states he was on the point of discharging him when the robbery took place.

"As for the necklace, it is an heirloom of great value, and the stones are beautiful, graded in size and perfectly matched. Mrs. Hill wore the necklace rather infrequently, keeping it in a specially constructed safe, and carrying a heavy insurance. Mrs. Mandeville wears quite a large quantity of jewelry, of which she is very fond, and on the night of the robbery was wearing some very attractive pieces. Mr. Hill himself suggested to his wife that she should wear the diamonds that evening because of the jewelry worn by Mrs. Mandeville."

Burke turned to Mr. Hill.

"Would you mind giving us your impressions, Mr. Hill?"

"Not at all," replied Mr. Hill, "although I am a trifle weary of being continually requested to repeat my story. The diamonds were insured for the simple purpose of saving me all the worry and inconvenience of just such a procedure as this in the event of their loss. However, it seems that the amount involved in the insurance policy, one hundred and fifty thousand dollars, has resulted in the company conducting an investigation which is taking up a great deal of my time."

Hill smiled pleasantly while he spoke, but, in spite of the polish of his manner, it was plain to be seen he was somewhat irritated by the demands of the insurance company on his time.

"I have absolutely nothing to add to what Captain Park has stated. He has prepared his data from interviewing a large number of persons, and he seems to have thoroughly grasped all the facts."

"Let me ask you a few questions then," said Burke, "and I shall try to be as brief as possible. Had you planned to go to the theater on the night of the robbery?"

"No. We did not really decide to go until about half an hour before we left the house. Mrs. Mandeville had been reading a review of the play, and mentioned it in a general way. The picture was 'The Panther's Paw,' of which you have of course heard and which has attracted some considerable comment. We all became interested in the discussion, and it was finally suggested that we attend the show that evening.

"I had previously instructed the chauffeur to be in readiness in the event we should want the car, and I personally notified him, about fifteen minutes before we left, to bring it around to the front door."

"What can you say of the character of your servants?" inquired Burke.

"That is rather a difficult question," came

the reply. "The butler as it happens, and as Captain Park has told you, is an ex-convict; but I determined to give him another chance in the world, and he has proven a model servant in every way. I have repeatedly tested his honesty and have absolutely convinced myself of his integrity. I do not presume to dictate to you in the matter of your investigations, but I should consider it extremely unfortunate if he should be at all inconvenienced in this matter because of his record.

"The other two servants have been with us for varying periods of time; the maid for a year—and, frankly, I do not like her—the chauffeur for three or four weeks. I have twice suspected him of petty dishonesties and was on the point of dischraging him."

Burke turned to Captain Park.

"Have you found any individual stones in any of the pawnshops which might have been taken from the necklace, even by recutting?"

Park hesitated and smiled.

"Yes, I have, but apparently the clue is worthless. In the shop of Nichols, whom we have long had under suspicion as a 'fence,' we found several stones, evenly matched and of a color and size which led us to believe they had been taken from the Hill necklace. We immediately summoned Mr. Hill to identify the stones, and then found out rather a funny thing. Nichols was able to prove absolutely that the stones, in their present form, had been in his possession for more than two weeks preceding the robbery. To further dispose of the matter, Mr. Hill states that the diamonds were not of the same appearance as the stones in the stolen necklace."

Hill interrupted.

"Really, Mr. Burke, I am not an expert on such matters, but you will understand that I know a little about precious stones, and years of association with the necklace has made me quite familiar with the appearance of its stones. It is hard to describe the difference between the Nichols diamonds and those of the necklace, but there is a difference, and I really think the stones could not be the same."

Burke sat in silence for a moment, then drew a sheet of paper toward him, wrote rapidly for a minute and pressed the buzzer on his desk. A special officer entered from the outer office in answer to the summons and to him Burke handed the paper without a word. The officer saluted and withdrew.

Then followed a remarkable change in the great detective. He seemed to have dismissed the case from his mind, and sat and chatted amiably with Captain Park, talking over past cases and subjects of current interest, with only an occasional reference to the matter in hand. He must have kept this up for half an hour, and it was very evident Hill was becoming quite impatient. The dark, sullen detective from the insurance company sat in morose silence and took no part in the conversation. Captain Park seemed to notice nothing unusual in the procedure and took part in the conversation with zest, proving himself an interesting talker.

Hill began to show his impatience more plainly, and it was evident that he was about to again call attention to the value of his time, when Burke abruptly turned once more to the problem in hand.

"What were the diamonds worth, Mr. Hill?" he inquired.

"Something over one hundred and eighty thousand," replied Hill. "They were insured for only one hundred and fifty thousand," he added.

Burke thought for a few moments.

"Don't you think it would be a good plan to get this butler, Higgins, and give him a good, old-fashioned third degree?" he inquired of Captain Park.

It was Hill who answered the question.

"Positively no, if I may have the right to say a word. I am so absolutely certain of the honesty of Higgins that I must, as a citizen, refuse to have him made the victim of a brutal inquisition.

"You will pardon me, Mr. Burke, but I do not greatly favor the method of forcing persons to talk, and I must decidedly refuse to participate in any such procedure directed against an innocent man merely because he is unfortunate enough to have a criminal record. I tell you I am absolutely

convinced the man is honest and has reformed."

At that moment a low-pitched buzzer sounded on Burke's desk, one long and one short, evidently some prearranged signal, for Burke dropped his impersonal, detached air and turned on Hill.

"I want to ask you a question which may seem trivial, but upon your answer much may depend, and I ask that you consider your answer carefully. Did you, a few seconds before the robbery, light a cigar or cigarette?"

I was at a loss to understand what Burke was driving at, and studied his face for a moment, hoping to see there some clue for his placing such emphasis upon so trivial a matter. His eyes were fastened on Mr. Hill in a keen scrutiny, but his face was as inscrutable as a wooden mask.

A moment's silence and then I turned to look at Mr. Hill. His face was white as a piece of paper, his hands grasped convulsively at the arm of the chair, and he finally answered in low tones:

"I believe I did."

"Yes," continued Burke, "you did; and you did so to enable your butler, Higgins, waiting in the parked car ahead, to advise the two hold-up men that it was time to stage the robbery."

Hill, who had now regained a measure of self-control, jumped to his feet.

"Prove it," he cried. "It's easy enough for you armchair detectives to make these wild accusations. Now you have started something, and you either prove that statement or my lawyers file suit against you for criminal slander."

Burke sat, cool and calm. The sulky, dark detective was jarred out of his morose ill-humor and his eyes seemed starting from his head. Personally I thought Burke must have taken temporary leave of his senses. Mr. Hill was one of the prominent, established men of the community. Then I looked at Captain Park, and he actually seemed to be smiling.

"Sit down, Hill; sit down," commanded Burke. "You know, after all, this is merely a matter of coincidence. Half an hour before you came here your precious butler, Higgins, hearing I had been called in on the case, fearing a solution and desiring to save his own skin, came to me and made a complete confession. He told me in detail how you had planned the robbery, how you had arranged to market the real stones two weeks earlier through a fence, had substituted a paste imitation necklace which had even passed the casual inspection of your wife, who knows little or nothing about gems, and finally how you had arranged to have the imitation necklace stolen in the presence of witnesses in order to collect the insurance. Higgins is in my office now waiting to confirm the confession in your presence."

Burke pressed the button on his desk, the door in the outer room opened in response to the signal and a person whom I rightly surmised to be Higgins was led into the room.

"Higgins," snapped Burke, "are you ready to tell us all you know of this robbery?"

"Yes, sir," replied Higgins without hesitation or evasion.

"Well," continued Burke, "perhaps we had better wait just a few minutes before we take your statement. If you will just wait in the outer office a little longer."

The officer and Higgins passed out through the door. It was unnecessary for Hill to say a word. As soon as he saw Higgins enter the room he had slumped down in his chair, and I thought for a moment he had fainted.

"How about it, Hill?" queried Captain Park. "Are you ready now to make a confession?"

"It's true," admitted Hill in halting tones. "I suffered heavy reverses in Wall Street speculations, and it was necessary to raise money at once. The necklace was the only article of any great value I possessed and which I could readily turn into cash. I needed more than I could realize on it on a forced sale, and took Higgins into my confidence. Between us we planned to sell the necklace for one hundred and twenty-five thousand by taking the individual stones and marketing them separately. Then by the fake hold-up we were able to collect the in-

surance of one hundred and fifty thousand, in addition to the value of the gems we secured from Mrs. Mandeville.

"However, the idea originated with that sneaking butler, and if he had kept his mouth shut we would never have been caught.

"As it was," he snapped at Burke, "you didn't catch me through any brilliant detective work, but merely by a chance coincidence."

Burke smiled.

"Well, those things will happen. Captain Park, will you require my services any further in the matter?"

"I think not," replied Park, rising to his feet at the hint the interview was over and taking the unfortunate Hill with him. "I certainly am glad that the matter has been cleared up. Of course we will see that charges are immediately lodged against Mr. Hill. Great work, I'm sure, Mr. Burke. You are to be congratulated."

The detective from the insurance company, who had hardly said a word since he entered the room, but preserved a sullen demeanor, now said, with more than a trace of professional jealousy in his tone:

"A very fortunate coincidence indeed."

I noticed a look pass between Captain Park and Burke, a knowing, humorous smile, and then I realized, for the first time, that I had just witnessed a wonderful piece of detective work, one which not only had completely fooled Hill, but also the detective from the insurance company.

The others had hardly left the room before I feverishly turned on Burke with pencil and notebook ready.

"Please tell me about it," I begged.

Burke laughed, a slow, lazy laugh of complete relaxation, as of one who had just finished a difficult job to his entire satisfaction.

"There's nothing much to it. It was merely a case of feeling one's way. Needless to say, both the insurance company and Captain Park felt that there was some unusual angles to the case, but they were unable to place their hands on anything definite.

"As I told you before, a clue is merely a straight line pointing to the real solution of a crime, and it is only necessary to get two of these clues, interpret them properly, find the point of intersection, and we have the solution of the crime. In the present case we had a number of clues. Here's the way I figured it out:

"First, the robbers must have known the route of the car in advance. They were waiting for it in the proper place to effect a hold-up. This route of the car was determined by Hill less than half an hour before the start, and he admitted giving the directions to the chauffeur.

"Second, the robbers knew Mrs. Hill was wearing the necklace that night, as they asked for that specific piece of jewelry. The fact that they overlooked some cash on Mr. Mandeville shows that the main object of the robbery was to secure the Hill necklace.

"Third, Hill constantly reiterated that he *thought* the diamonds in the possession of the fence were not the Hill stones, because of a difference in appearance. When we remember the proof showed unmistakably that the diamonds had been in possession of the fence for more than two weeks before the possession of the robbery, had Hill been honest in the matter he would have *known* that they were not the jewels, and would have based his reason on that ground.

"Fourth, he was unduly anxious to impress us with his butler's honesty, and to prevent him being given any examination, fearing doubtless that Higgins could not stand a 'third degree.' In order to emphasize Higgins's honesty, Hill blackened the characters of the other two servants.

"Now when we add to these clues the fact that Hill constantly called attention to the fact that the value of the necklace was greater than the amount of the insurance, coupled with the fact that he himself had insisted on his wife wearing it that night, we could be almost positive that he was the instigator of the crime with Higgins as his accomplice.

"As soon as I arrived at this conclusion I summoned my assistant, sent him to get Higgins and tell him Mr. Hill wished him to come to my office to tell what he knew of

the crime. It was only natural that such a request would be made, and Higgins intended to tell the story he had previously concocted. Hill, however, with his very evident desire to keep Higgins from being examined, showed the weak point in his case, and by playing on his imagination and introducing Higgins at the psychological moment I was able to throw him into a panic.

"Of course I had to be sure before making such an accusation against a man of Hill's standing. I knew that to the robbers sitting in the dark, waiting for the approach of the Hill auto, all machines looked alike—merely two glowing headlights. In order to successfully plan the robbery it was necessary for them to have some signal advising them of the approach of the car. The most natural signal would be the lighting of a cigar or cigarette. It would seem a trivial act in itself, but it was absolutely necessary to the success of the plan.

"When I shot that question at Hill he realized I must have some inside knowledge, and that I suspected him. From the look which flashed across his face I was sure he suspected Higgins of having betrayed him. His conduct made me absolutely certain I was on the right track, and that it was time to spring the trap."

I had reached for my hat. "Mr. Burke," I pleaded, "may I have the release of this for my paper? It will be the biggest scoop in years, and make my name as a reporter."

"You have done me a good turn," replied Burke. "I feel obligated to you, and when I asked you to remain in the room during the interview, it was because I felt it was very possible that some such situation might develop. I solve eight out of ten mysteries right here in my office, upon clues that others have found without appreciating.

"Go ahead, young man; you have the exclusive on the story as far as I am concerned. Keep within the facts and go as far as you like. The arrest of Mr. Hill should make a story sufficiently exciting to please any editor."

I hardly stopped to thank him, and then tore down the steps with that exultation in my breast which comes to one only once or twice in a lifetime.

As a scrub reporter I had landed the greatest beat of a decade, for such it turned out to be.

A "BAD MAN" AT FOURTEEN

FOURTEEN-YEAR-OLD Eddie Blumberg, a bad boy who preferred to die in a blaze of the peculiar kind of glory attaching to being a bad man rather than go back to the State Reformatory at Kearney, was buried at Geneva, Neb., the other day.

Eddie was a small-town product, and got so tough that he was sent to the reformatory. There he behaved himself so well that he was paroled to the Sheriff of Fillmore County, but went bad again. He ran away from home, taking the automobile of his stepfather, Sam Wixon. He also loaded a shotgun and a revolver into the car.

The next heard of him was at Smith Center, Kan., where he stopped to have his gas tank filled. After which he drew his shotgun on the tank man and drove off. A posse followed, and several times surrounded him, but his display of firearms kept the members at a respectable distance. At one time one of his pursuers came face to face with him, and when the lad leveled his gun and told him that he would shoot to kill if the man did not move at once, he moved right away.

For two days he kept a posse at bay, but the morning of the third day after his departure he was found dying on the roadside. He said he had slept the night before in a school-house, and made up his mind to kill himself rather than go back to the reformatory. His mother was sent for, but he died before she arrived.

Cold Pearls

By ROBERT RUSSELL

PART ONE

CHAPTER ONE

TEMPLETON ENTICES

MR. LODGE TEMPLETON, wealthy aristocrat, lived luxuriously alone with his lonely thoughts. Everything purchasable had been his all through the sixty-two years of his life. His beak-like nose had grown more like the beak of a hawk as selfishness increased. If he had been a king in a land where kings ruled he would have believed in the Divine right of kings. As he lived in America he believed in the Divine right of certain individuals, and he was one of those individuals.

He sat alone this night in front of the fire in the library of his handsome residence. It was not a home; no building where Lodge Templeton resided could be a home. As the firelight played on his figure, clad in immaculate evening dress, he gave one the appearance of a modern Mephistopheles. It was about ten o'clock; the servants were somewhere out of sight and hearing. Only the snapping and cracking of the fire dared to interfere with the silence Lodge Templeton seemed to desire.

A massive table stood at his right hand and upon it stood a decanter and two glasses, one of which he filled occasionally. Then he would sit there looking into the fire in a contemptuous sort of way, sipping, sipping the mellow liquor.

Once he rose and walked across the floor, covered by a rich imported rug, into the hall. He entered a small reception-room on the other side and glanced about with a quiet air of satisfaction. There was no means of egress from this small room save the door through which he had entered, and on returning to the hall he closed and locked this door, putting the key in his pocket. He stood a moment listening. Then he glanced at his watch, an aloof disdain marking his expression. Now he entered the library again and filled his glass from the decanter. Again he stood listening.

There came a ring at the doorbell, and he moved rapidly to it. As the heavy door swung back a young man entered.

"Is Mr. Templeton——" began the young man.

"The servants have retired, Fortescue," interrupted Templeton. "I did not care to be disturbed in our conversation, so I answered the door myself. You telephoned me that you wanted to have a talk with me?"

"Yes, Mr. Templeton," began the other hurriedly, "I think I ought to tell you something."

"Come into the library; there is a fire," returned Templeton, closing the front door and leading the way toward the room where the first still crackled and snapped. He paused at the doorway, allowing the younger man to pass in ahead of him.

Fortescue was one of the type common in a great city. Well-groomed, not yet middle-aged, but bearing the marks of a life devoted to pleasure, his slightly clouded eyes told of vitality lost. He dropped into a seat before the fire and glanced with nonchalant interest at the decanter and the two glasses, one already filled.

"Ah," said Templeton, filling the other glass, "I see my young friend is nervous. Perhaps a drop of something of which I may boast a bit would do him good."

"Thanks, awfully," replied the other,

Then he gulped the liquor down, his hand trembling slightly. "No use beating about the bush, Mr. Templeton," he went on, staring into the flames. "I have come to see you about Louise."

He pulled out his gold cigarette case, abstracted a cigarette and laid the case on the table by his side.

"Louise," said Templeton almost thoughtfully, "is always an interesting subject, especially"—he added whimsically—"if one's eye is artistic. A comic-opera prima donna, not too averse to wearing daring gowns, who leaves the stage at the height of her success and retires to semi-private life—such an one is always interesting."

"Oh, don't sneer," exclaimed Fortescue. "Of course I know that you know I've been helping her financially. But you don't know what I know about her. She's as straight as a string and wants to keep on that way. She left the stage because I wanted her to. I want to marry her—but how long I will be able to hold her when such men as you—who don't want to marry her—are offering her all sorts of things—well, I don't know."

He reached for the decanter and, with a mumbled "Pardon me," poured out another drink and tossed it down quickly.

"You've had everything you wanted all your life," the younger man went on, "and because you can't have her you've made up your mind to get her, anyway. And the worst of it is I don't know but you'll be able to do it."

"And evil," smiled Lodge Templeton, "will triumph over good. The old sinner will batter down the virtuous ramparts of —of well, moderate youthful virtue, or near-virtue."

"Sneer, sneer," cried Fortescue, rising and walking up and down the room. "Heaven knows I'm rotten enough, and I don't know how long I can keep decent. But we don't have to pull the girl down if she has any chance to keep away from the things that have made us rotten, do we?"

"Rotten, rotten?" queried Templeton, his beak-like nose seeming to narrow, grow harder. "That is a very ordinary word for the son of an old, aristocratic family to use. You, Mr. Fortescue, may be, as you term it, 'rotten,' but I refuse to plead guilty to such a charge."

Fortescue tossed his head impatiently and looked again at the decanter. Even in his anger, however, his innate sense of propriety forbade him to help himself again. Templeton, however, played the gracious host, and again Fortescue felt the insidiously delightful liquor burn gently its way down his throat.

"What I have been trying to say to you," Fortescue went on, resuming his seat in front of the fire, "is that Louise promised me tonight that she would marry me in a month and we would go away from the city and try to forget the life that has about done me up and which will do her up if she keeps at it. What I want is to beg you not to see her, Mr. Templeton—not to send her any more flowers, any more jewels. Some women just can't resist them—you know that. I want her to keep that promise to me. I've spent all my money, practically, and won't have any more for six months. I can't buy her any jewels just now. Don't make me look like a piker. Give the girl a chance. I know how she loves gems—I've been tempted to steal some to bring to her. Why, I'm going to her apartment when I leave you. How I would like"—and his eyes were fixed on the golden glowing coals—"how I would like to take her a beautiful string of pearls."

Templeton was gazing into the fire, too. He was smiling, and as he spoke his words came low, gentle.

"In a little reception-room right across the hall," he said quietly, "there is perhaps the most beautiful string of pearls in the city. It is in a little cabinet, in a velvet case. The pearls glow gloriously against the black velvet. You see," he went on, taking a key from his pocket and tossing it onto the massive table at his side, "I have locked the door into that room—I was afraid of thieves. I had rather intended to give that string of pearls to a most beautiful little lady of my acquaintance—pretty name—enticing name—Louise."

Fortescue rose quickly. Again he forgot all propriety—he forgot everything except

the torture this man was inflicting upon him.

"It's no use," he cried. "I see it's no use. I might just as well appeal to the devil himself. You'll go on trying to make it hard for Louise to give up this sort of thing. And you'll win her with the pearls and other things like 'em. And"—he looked down at the table—"what a rotter I am. I promised her I'd cut out the liquor except when I was with her."

"Ah, Mr. Fortescue," said Templeton, raising a full glass and extending it to his caller. "Won't you have a little farewell sip with me?"

Fortescue grasped the glass and the two men drank together.

Templeton sank down into an easychair as Fortescue moved toward the door.

"Of course you won't promise?" he asked thickly.

"Making promises," replied Lodge Templeton coldly, "is one of the best things I do not do. You will pardon me if I do not rise again to see you out. I am an old man, you know, and must save my steps." He smiled scornfully at his own characterization of himself as he heard Fortescue pass from the room.

But Lodge Templeton listened carefully for the closing of the front door. The wind had risen, and now and then it sighed through the trees that surrounded the great residence. But no sound of a closing door came. The rain began to fall. Occasionally it beat against the big, plate-glass windows. But no sound of a closing door came. The fire crackled and snapped—then died down to quiet. And at last there came the sound of the closing of a door. Then it was that Lodge Templeton moved, poured out a glass of liquor and raised it to his lips. In his brain there formed the silent toast, "To Louise and her glorious beauty."

He glanced at the massive table as he replaced his glass; at the key to the reception-room, still lying where he had tossed it, and at the golden cigarette case of young Fortescue there beside it.

Now he took the key and rose, passing across the hall to the reception-room door. He unlocked it and entered, going at once to the cabinet in which he had placed the pearl necklace. He opened the cabinet and glanced inside.

Quite as though he expected it, showing no emotion on his hard, sneering face, Lodge Templeton stepped back.

The necklace was gone.

He passed again into the hall and directly to the telephone, calling a number which he evidently knew. After a moment there came a response.

"This is Lodge Templeton speaking," he said, giving his address. "I have been robbed of a valuable pearl necklace. Will you send me a detective at once—as decent a person as possible, if you please. Yes, Lodge Templeton. Yes, I presume you do know of me, but never mind that. A detective at once."

He hung up the receiver and returned to his seat in front of the fire. He poured another bit of the liquor into his glass and raised it to his lips. He was smiling.

CHAPTER TWO

VANE OF HEADQUARTERS

VANE, the man from Headquarters, was frankly impressed by the appointments of Lodge Templeton's home, when he came a few minutes after this telephonic message. His inquiring eyes glowed with interest in everything he noted as he sat in front of the fire and listened to the older man's account of his placing the necklace in the cabinet, his locking the door, his receiving a caller in the person of Fortescue and the latter's departure. Templeton was occupying the seat Fortescue had taken, while Vane sat on the other side of the table where the elderly host had been earlier in the evening. The decanter and glasses had been left as they were, and once Vane noticed that Templeton frowned as he glanced at them.

"Don't mind me," smiled the young man from Headquarters, guessing at his host's thought. "I don't happen to be investigating a liquor law violation case."

"Nevertheless," returned Templeton, "I think I shall put the things away. I do not often bring them out." He rose somewhat awkwardly, brushed against the table and toppled it, heavy as it was. He reached forward quickly across the table and seized the glass at Vane's elbow just in time to prevent it from falling to the floor. The glass nearest him, however, and the decanter fell, both breaking into small pieces on the hardwood floor.

Vane jumped to his feet and began immediately to pick up the pieces, his actions almost boyishly apologetic.

"That's a shame," he said. "I admire fine cutglass."

"And so do I," returned Templeton, "especially those pieces which have a history. You see I saved one of them." He held up to the light the frail bit of beautiful glass he had captured before it had fallen, sighed regretfully as he saw the pieces of the other glass and decanter on the floor, then placed the glass upon the table again.

"But it is no matter, Mr. Vane," he said. "Please don't bother with those pieces. Let us attend to the more important matter. I have told you all I can about the disappearance of the necklace. I called you merely to have a formal investigation made."

"You say," said Vane slowly, his young eyes losing a bit of their frankness and gaining a something about which one might well guess, "you say that no one came into the hall out there after you locked the door except Mr. Fortescue?"

"No one; I am positive of that," replied Templeton. "The floor is hard, as you noticed. I could have heard any one moving about out there unless, of course, some sneak thief came in wearing no shoes, perhaps. And you have looked for footprints of socks or rubber-soled shoes since you came here."

"I don't rely entirely upon footprints," smiled the young detective, his eyes straying again to the fine appointments of the room. "It would seem, then, that Fortescue must have gone into the reception-room, perhaps unlocking it with a skeleton key, and taken the necklace."

"I cannot believe that possible, Mr. Vane," replied Templeton. "Thoughtless as he is, and—well, he had been drinking before he came here, and a bit with me—I don't believe he would stoop to robbing me. However, if you want to see him you will be able to find him at the apartment of a certain charming woman in whom we both have a friendly interest." He turned to young Vane seriously and spoke impressively. "Frankly, Mr. Vane," he said, "I am glad they did as I asked—they sent a detective who, I can see, is a 'decent' person. You will understand that I do not want to have her name connected with this matter in any way. And of course you can understand that a man in my position could not afford to have mine associated with any scandal. I merely wanted an official investigation, but I would prefer to lose the necklace rather than have any publicity given to the case."

"I understand, Mr. Templeton," replied the young man. "There will be no more publicity than is necessary."

"It will be worth your while to see that there is none," returned Templeton, and his beak-like nose narrowed again; his eyes assumed that suggestion of a consciousness of superiority over any ordinary detective that was not calculated to inspire a kindly feeling.

Vane had fought in France, he had performed services for the United States Government that had won him immediate recognition on the metropolitan police force, young as he was. He had felt the touch of approval of real men. He was a real man. At this moment his curly hair seemed to curl just a bit tighter; his frank eyes seemed to forget their frankness and become big lenses which were given to sizing men up.

"Really, Mr. Templeton, you don't have to dangle a bribe in front of my eyes. Bribes went out of date when men of sixty years or so were just regretting their wasted youth. Now," and he resumed his frank, attractive manner, "I would like to look into that room you locked, and I would like to see the servants just for a minute. Then we'll go to see Mr. Fortescue—if you don't

mind taking me there and the charming young woman won't object."

It took but a few minutes to go through the operations suggested by the man from Headquarters. Nothing was learned from the astonished servants, and they were sent back to their quarters. The reception-room, carefully investigated, seemed to offer no clue to the disappearance of the pearl necklace, and Templeton donned his overcoat and hat as Vane prepared to go.

"Remember, Mr. Templeton," said Vane as they stood a moment in the doorway, "I am basing my work on what you have told me—and what I have seen. If you have not stated things exactly as they were—Fortescue's arrival, your conversation, his departure and all that happened, some serious mistake may have been made—and detectives are not gifted with powers of second sight, you know, whatever those complimentary writers say about us."

"Everything was just as I have told you," replied the older man as they stepped out into the darkness, closing the door behind them.

"I will be my own chauffeur tonight," said Templeton, leading the way to a spot back of the house where stood a concrete garage. "The servants might talk." He unlocked the door and led the way in the darkness to one of the three cars standing there. A few minutes were spent getting the engine started and making a careful exit from the little building. With characteristic care Templeton left the car and closed the door of the garage behind him. Then, slowly, carefully, he drove around in front of the house and down the drive toward the gate.

Back inside the house, the instant the door closed on Vane and Templeton, and as they walked around to the garage, things began to happen. A door beneath the stairs, opening into a closet into which could penetrate no noise save such as the closing of the front door, opened and a head was thrust out. For a moment the man listened. Then, on tiptoes, he passed down the hall and looked into the empty library, silent now save for the sizzling of the almost dead fire.

Immediately the man's eyes sought the massive table. Quickly he darted forward and grasped the key still lying there. It was the work of but a moment for him to move back to the door of the reception-room, open it and step across to the cabinet, which he placed by the aid of a lighted match. He drew open the doors and peered within. Bric-a-brac of all kinds was there—but no case containing a pearl necklace. The man's hands fell at his sides. He stood resolute. The match burned, scorching his fingers.

Now quickly he seemed to recover himself. He ran into the hall and opened the front door, grasping his hat and coat from inside the closet where he had been hiding ever since the moment, nearly an hour ago, when he had closed the door and had given Lodge Templeton the impression that he had gone. He stood a second in the vestibule, putting on his coat and hat. There came to his ears the sound of a car, moving out of the garage back of the house. He crept back closer into the darkness of the vestibule and then, as the car passed the front door, he darted out and climbed upon the trunk carried at the back of the long, low roadster. Here he remained as Templeton, Vane by his side, drove down the road, through the great gate of the premises and out onto the boulevard. Here he remained, in such a position for the first time in his life, until the vehicle was approaching an all-night taxi stand. At this point he dropped off and for a moment watched the roadster as it disappeared down the avenue. Then he darted to the first of the cabs, gave the chauffeur hurried directions and was whirled away in the wake of the Templeton roadster.

Fortescue, in his hiding place beneath the stairs where he had been watching until Templeton retired for the night as he expected he would do, had heard nothing of the talk concerning the disappearance of the necklace, the calling of the detective, or anything else that had happened. He had been aroused only by the loud sound of the final closing of the door when Templeton and Vane had departed. A thief in spirit at least, who had waited for a chance

to steal the necklace after Templeton had gone to bed, Fortescue was on his way now to the woman on whom he would bestow anything in the world he possessed. He must see her before this other. If Templeton was on his way to Louise, he, Forttescue, must get there before him.

CHAPTER THREE

THE FINDING OF FORTESCUE.

TEMPLETON and Vane drove on, all unconscious of the uninvited passenger who had stolen a ride for a few blocks. They did not know when Fortescue jumped on the rear of the roadster in front of Templeton's house; they did not know when he left the vehicle near the taxi stand. Lodge Templeton seemed in no hurry to reach their destination. He acted as though he were performing a simple duty in taking the detective to the home of Louise.

And Vane had suggested the course downtown which they were following. It was when they were approaching an all-night drugstore that he first spoke.

"If you don't mind, Mr. Templeton," said the young man, "I wish you would stop here. I want to telephone my brief report."

"Is it necessary yet?" queried the other. "Will there be any one at headquarters to receive your report?"

"It is better that I send some word," responded Vane. "And," he went on, "would you tell me who the young woman is we are going to see?"

"I would rather keep her name out of any reports," returned Templeton, frowning.

"I shall not mention her name over the telephone," said Vane. "But I want to know who she is. You know, Mr. Templeton, the police do have some information that often helps in matters of this kind."

"I prefer not to tell you her name at present," returned the other, quite as though that settled the matter.

"What, Mr. Templeton, is the name of the young woman we are going to see?" Vane's question was low spoken. He did not seem now the young man rather agreeable, rather careless of detail. He was the official; and the official was asking a question.

"Her name is Louise Durant," replied Templeton.

"Recently musical star; at present 'resting,'" commented Vane. Thank you."

The car had come to a halt before the drugstore. Perhaps Templeton had not intended it so; perhaps it had been his subconscious mind that had directed his movements. At any rate the car stopped and Vane stepped out.

He was gone but a few minutes and had regained his pleasant manner when he returned. Yet underneath his smile there was the suggestion of a deeper appreciation of the importance of his duties.

They drove on in silence until Lodge Templeton stopped the roadster in front of a modest apartment hotel. Here they entered and found the young night clerk quickly alert at the sight of the millionaire. To Templeton's brief "Miss Durant is expecting me," the clerk nodded obsequiously while Vane and Templeton passed up the one flight of stairs, not waiting for the elevator.

"Miss Durant occasionally consults me about her affairs," muttered Templeton in explanation of his calling even at this late hour without being summoned. "I come here rather frequently."

Now he stopped in front of a door and knocked gently. He spoke low to the detective. "Please let me do the explaining at first," he said. "I do not want to startle Miss Durant. Mr. Fortescue is a friend of hers. I would prefer not to have her suspect the object of your visit."

As he finished the door opened and a young woman stood before them in the dim light of the little hallway of the apartment. Her manner was hesitant, timid almost, but the moment she recognized Lodge Templeton she seemed relieved. To Vane she appeared to be little more than a girl—a beautiful girl with the sort of eyes one would remember.

"This is a friend of mine, a Mr. Vane," said Templeton gently, his voice losing all

of its former harshness; his attitude one of the most considerate courtesy. "I told the young man downstairs that you were expecting me. I hope you will pardon the lateness of the hour."

They had stepped into the hallway. The girl closed the door and looked inquiringly first at Templeton, then at the detective.

"I—I am not dressed for visitors," she smiled a little wistfully Vane thought.

"It is quite important that we see Mr. Fortescue at once," continued Templeton as she led the way into the nearest room. "He told me an hour or so ago that he was coming here."

"He—he is not here," responded the girl, again hesitatingly.

Lodge Templeton, bowing as though asking permission, seated himself in a small chair standing against the drawn curtains which evidently separated this room from one beyond. Vane and Louise Durant remained standing.

The situation was awkward. It was evident Templeton did not believe the girl. It was plain that she was embarrassed by the presence of this stranger, Vane. And it was certain that the man from headquarters would not relieve the tension of the moment.

"You are quite sure," said Templeton, after a few minutes of silence, "that Mr. Fortescue is not here? I don't want to press the matter, Louise, but it is very important that this gentleman sees him as quickly as possible."

The dim light of the room came from rose-shaded lamps. The soft negligee the girl wore was rose-colored. Gentleness seemed to surround her—gentleness and trouble. Her beauty was gentle; her gown was soft; her eyes deeply liquid.

"He—he was here not long ago, Mr. Templeton," she murmured at last.

Young Vane was experiencing one of the trying moments that come to a detective who has not lost all sense and appreciation of human suffering. In this girl's eyes he saw it; but he saw something else, and that something else was not sweet, as the girl was sweet; it was not beautiful, as the girl was beautiful—it was fear, awful, almost cringing fear. He glanced away from her eyes and looked about the room. He gazed at Templeton, who was intent upon the girl's face. He noted the brightly-polished shoes Templeton wore. He scrutinized subconsciously the rose-tinted rug, the portieres against which Templeton sat. Then, once again he looked at the girl's eyes; then at the floor beneath Templeton's chair.

Now Vane rose quickly.

"Miss Durant," he said a little harshly, "I am a detective from headquarters. You say Mr. Fortescue is not here. Is there any one here?"

"No one," faltered the girl, involuntarily stepping backward away from this stranger. "No one is here except my maid, asleep in her room at the back of the apartment."

Vane moved quickly across the floor, past Templeton, and seized the portiere against which the latter sat. He swept back the heavy, rose-tinted curtain and dropped to his knees beside the form which lay there.

A cry came from the girl. Templeton leaped to his feet and gazed down at the detective. Vane's back was turned to them, but his voice came sharply distinct.

"Look here," he said. "Is this Fortescue?"

"Oh, yes, yes," cried the girl. "He had been drinking and I let him lie there where he fell."

Templeton did not move. The rose-tinted rays of the two lamps in the other room fell upon the face of the man lying there.

"I am sorry to say," said Lodge Templeton, "that it is Mr. Fortescue. He was not intoxicated when he left my house an hour or more ago."

"He is not drunk now," came the detective's words as he arose and faced the others.

"Not drunk?" cried Louise Durant.

"Not drunk," repeated Vane, moving across the room to her side. "He is dead!"

(*Concluded in our next issue.*)

Loot of Classy Crooks

By POLICE CAPTAIN HOWARD

WHILE business men suffer more or less from the depredations of forgers and embezzlers, the ultimate loss generally falls upon the surety companies with whom business concerns are insured. The increased cost of living has made pariahs of numberless men and women in positions of trust, trying to keep pace with the times on inadequate incomes.

There is an army of clerks, cashiers, bookkeepers and treasurers who handle money and are tempted to steal it. The surety company practically bets the employer that one of his men who is entrusted with funds will not rob him. The odds it offers are very heavy, as they gamble that most people are inherently honest, and, taking this risk, they relieve the business man of his responsibility. When a crooked employee is caught short in his accounts the surety company is told that it has lost its bet and must make good the defalcation.

An effort is made to find the embezzler. For this purpose a corps of skilled detectives is retained. If the crook is found (and he generally is) every means is employed to recover the stolen funds. It often happens that at least seventy-five per cent of the money comes back—in a few rare instances all of it. There are cases where no money was regained, and the culprit went to prison rather than confess where he hid the loot. He probably banked on getting the money upon his release, after serving a prison term. The police have a theory that embezzlements increase when economic conditions are bad. Unemployment has made crooks of otherwise honest men. But as a veteran detective for one of the insurance companies said:

"Most of these poor devils imagine they can beat the game, yet every one of them runs against a snag. I've found some as slick as sin, and others stupid asses, but they're all alike to me. A few succeed in covering their crookedness, a few get away to foreign countries, and a few more let the swag fly as soon as they get it. But in the large majority of cases we get the money back, and the pilferer goes to jail with a ruined reputation. Most of them are nabbed sooner or later, if they don't get out of the country or die."

"What is the main reason for these peculations?" I asked him.

"Extravagance. Most of the cases I have taken up are those of people who live beyond their income. They get in a jam for money and steal it. Half of these men could save themselves from prison if they'd cut down their expenses and refrain from running into debt. Sometimes it's a foolish wife who gets them in trouble. Her demands for fine clothes and expensive forms of entertainment has often gotten her husband so desperate that he'll steal to gratify her whims. But women are not always the source of the trouble. Men try short-cuts to wealth, and stealing is the easiest way. You may have noticed that men like to show a big front to their friends and neighbors. It would sprain their pride to be considered poor. To keep up the bluff they must have fine houses, stylish clothes, automobiles, bootleg liquor and expensive radio sets to impress their importance on their friends. They can't afford these things, so they rob their employers to get them. It never seems to occur to them that a day of reckoning is sure to come. They are just egotistical enough to think they can get away with it and escape detection, public disgrace and punishment. The cleverer they think they are the harder they fall.

Of course there are cases in which a noble motive actuates the criminal.

"I mean a case like that of the poor, underpaid wretch who helps himself to little sums to pay a doctor's bill for his sick child, or the piker who pilfers nickels and quarters to give his wife or parents the commonest necessities of life. These petty thieves seldom steal just to acquire money for their own personal use, and it generally happens to be an office worker whose salary has not mounted with the excessive increase in commodities."

"Who are the worst offenders, young men or old?"

"Formerly these white-collar crooks were mostly young men, and the wide-awake business man had a settled conviction that middle-aged and older men were more dependable. But this year the old bucks surprised them by showing a majority of convictions in the police courts. Most of the defaulters have been convicted, too. This proves that there is little difference in dependability between married and single men, although home life has a slight deterrent effect on married men. On the other hand, unmarried men are sometimes prevented from criminating themselves by their love or fear of their parents. No, the young men are not wholly to blame. In the terrible crime wave we have been having few of the criminals were very young."

"How do women crooks compare with men?"

"Oh, the surety companies get plenty of women embezzlers from the ranks of the army of females who are invading office positions. There isn't much difference between a woman and a man when it comes to crime, except that the women are often bolder in their operations than the men. This was recently shown by the bobbed-hair female bandit who has been holding up druggists and tradesmen with a revolver and calling in her male pal to rob their tills. In this case the woman did the most dangerous part of the job. In my experience I've found that women do not scorn stealing small sums, while men will not take a chance unless the amount is large. It is very seldom that women in high positions are dishonest—the defaulters are usually the women who only handle small change. Woman bookkeepers and lady cashiers for corporations have almost perfect records for honesty; nevertheless, many are closely watched despite their employers' confidence in them. That's because they sometimes slip, and here's an example: A demure little miss with the best of references secured a job with one of our prominent telegraph companies. She began as a clerk in a telegraph office in a Western city, and afterward became manager of the office. Seeing a way to plunder the company, she began a systematic method of stealing, but realized that exposure was sure to follow the moment her books were audited. Just before her accounts were to be checked up she suddenly disappeared. She was a bold little schemer, and her very daring was responsible for her success as a crook, for she went to a distant city and secured a job at another branch of the same company. As she had changed her appearance by dying her red hair, and assumed a fictitious name, she was able to repeat her thefts for a while, and then went to still another State. Detectives were put on her trail and as reports of theft after theft came in, the culprit in each instance being a girl, the officers were sure it was the same person who did each job. They tracked her all through the West, and finally located her after she had robbed the same company in half a dozen cities.

"Another adroit woman crook who almost gave the surety companies heart failure was a person whose appearance made people think she was the last one on earth who might commit a crime. In the first place, she was as homely as a hedge fence, very prim and precise in deportment, and seldom smiled. She attended strictly to business, never made an error, displayed good judgment and was very efficient. Her employer trusted her implicitly, as there was no nonsense in her character, and made her assistant treasurer of the big company he presided over. Indeed, his confidence in the woman was so pronounced that he unhesitatingly signed any paper she placed before him requiring his signature. In this manner she managed to slip through hundreds

of fake vouchers that put her in temporary possession of the companies' Liberty bonds. Cutting off the coupons, she converted them into cash, which she pocketed. A clerk happened to notice that all payable coupons were used up too soon and became suspicious. He reported to the office manager, and when the woman went home for the night they broke open her desk and found the vouchers and some other records that gave her away. She was no piker, for when they counted up they found that she was short just $75,000. As she was only bonded for $10,000, the company's loss was exactly $65,000. Naturally she was arrested in an effort to recover the plunder, but we got back only a small part of what she had taken in cash. This was due to the fact that she had spent most of the money. We found that she was leading a sort of Jekyll and Hyde existence, for she lived in an unpretentious building, but we found her rooms furnished like a palace. A thorough investigation disclosed the fact that the lady, realizing how ugly she was, wisely figured that fine feathers made fine birds, so she bought an elaborate wardrobe, patronized the beautifying parlors, bought a swell car and, looking like a million dollars, she frequented the finest hotels and cabarets. There were over $5,000 worth of clothes in her flat, she had $15,000 worth of jewelry and over a thousand dollars' worth of choice liquor. Her car was an expensive Pierce Arrow, and she owned a $15,000 house. The sale of these assets only brought second-hand value, of course, so she had to pay the loss by a term in prison."

The detective paused, and I asked if he ever had any odd cases.

"Why, yes," he assented. "I once nabbed a sacrilegious little rat who cloaked his villainy under a pretty devout exterior. I don't know whether he was a pervert, the victim of a weak mind, or simply had a screw loose. At any rate, he was a bookkeeper by day and a religious fanatic at night. He was forever praying, and admitted to me that when he got on his knees before retiring he constantly prayed that he might be kept from temptation. He was so religious that when he robbed his employer he felt very bitter that his prayer to be kept from temptation had not been heeded. I wasn't sorry to see this nut go to Sing Sing. As a general thing, there's a motive behind nearly every crime, and yet there are instances where a crime is committed with no motive at all. These queer cases are rare, but I recall one in which a bank cashier trimmed his employers without the slightest expectation of remuneration for his risk. The man was ordinarily good enough, and held a position of great trust. One day two of his business acquaintances came to him with a proposition to finance a large manufacturing company which was on the shoals. They convinced him that the assets exceeded the liabilities. Strangely, the cashier became obsessed with the idea that the scheme was so sure to win that it was his duty to help them by any means. As he had no money of his own, and the business men suggested a system of kiting checks between his bank and another, he fell for the plan and put it into execution. Then the bank examiners came around, and he was caught short to the tune of $115,000 in his accounts, and frankly explained where the money was sunk. He was so enthusiastic about the ultimate success of the manufacturers that he had no fear of loss by the transaction, and did not awake from his dream until handcuffs were snapped on his wrists.

"Among the classy fraternity of criminals, bank clerks are not always the worst offenders, but they are more prone to be tempted, as they handle a great deal of cash. There was once a tremendous clean-up of millions that took place all over the country; it cast a certain amount of suspicion upon hundreds of paying-tellers, but it was never proved that they were in league with the band of crooks who put over the theft I am going to tell you about. On the face of it, the bank clerks all seemed to fall for the game with remarkable innocence. Anyway, this was what happened, as we afterward learned from the confession of one of the crooks we apprehended.

"A notorious forger happened to think of a scheme to swindle every bank in the world if his plans were carefully matured.

In order to carry out the idea he had to have the assistance of one crook in each city that he meant to attack. Having gathered a big band, he explained to them how the game was to be played. The gang was to disperse, one man going to each city. There he was to make a five-dollar purchase in a large store, tender a twenty-dollar bill in payment, and request the merchant to give him a check instead of cash to cover the $15 change. The crooks were all expert penmen and forgers. They were to note the name of the bank on which the $15 check was drawn and get a blank duplicate of the check. In case it was a specially made check which could not be duplicated, the crook was to try another merchant. As each crook got his $15 check and blank duplicate he telegraphed the news to the chief of the band in St. Louis, who kept in constant communication with each man by telegraph, and in code.

"Finally all the crooks had their $15 checks. They were then ready to put over the big swindle. Allowing for the difference in time between the various cities, each crook was ordered to go to the bank on which the $15 check was drawn at exactly 2.30 p. m. on the same day and present his check for payment. In order to be identified, each of the rascals had struck up an acquaintance with his hotel clerk, or some other well-known individual, in case the bank-teller asked for identification. But here's where the joker comes in. As soon as each crook had got his check from the merchant and a blank duplicate check he filled in the duplicate for $1,500, imitating all the writing on the check except the signature. Then he laid the genuine check on the blank one, fitted the edge together accurately, and tore the two checks in halves raggedly by holding them in close contact. Then, when he separated the two torn checks, each was torn exactly alike. He then took the left-hand part of the blank check, which had been raised to $1,500, and the right-hand half of the $15 check, on which the genuine signature was written, and pieced them together. The jagged tears in both pieces fitted to a hair's breadth. The check called for $1,500, and the signature was absolutely genuine. Paying-tellers of banks seldom give the body of a check more than a passing glance, but generally scrutinize the signature carefully. At exactly 2.30 p. m. on the same day in each city the crooks presented their torn checks to the paying-tellers of the different banks and said their checks had been torn by accident. The cashiers saw that the signatures were genuine, and, as torn checks were occasionally presented for payment, they saw nothing suspicious in the circumstance. Where identification was demanded it was promptly produced, and as $1,500 was not a very large sum for each merchant to draw the tellers immediately cashed the checks. If any of them had been suspicious he would have called up the merchant who issued the check to verify its being O. K. But none of the crooks aroused any doubt in the tellers' minds, so they got the money and disappeared to meet in New York.

"The whole thing had been done systematically, with great care and the utmost precision. Each move was timed to the minute. Several hundred banks had been mulcted, and at $1,500 a bank the total amount gathered, it may inferred, was tremendous. When the raised checks began to come back to the merchants the fraud was discovered, and the banks were hastily notified. As news of the gigantic swindle poured in from all over the country the magnitude of the game appalled every one. A few of the looters were arrested, but very little of the money was recovered, so far as the writer knows, and a new rule was made that no bank will cash a torn check unless the one who presents it is well known to the teller. In this case no charge of signature forgery could be sustained against the culprits, as the signatures were all genuine. Naturally the detectives who were put on the case suspected collusion between the tellers and crooks, but this idea was abandoned, as all the tellers were proven honest men. This trick cannot now be repeated.

"In case of a defalcation the culprit generally begins as a piker and ends as a plunger. He may have been strictly honest all his life until the time came when he pilfered his first dollar. It is usually the first

stolen dollar that leads to his downfall. He expects to return the dollar at the first opportunity. When it dawns on him how easily he got the dollar he don't return it, but takes more and more until his first resistance to temptation is shattered and he finds himself hopelessly involved. Then he begins to speculate, gamble, and go in for all sorts of extravagances. He craves expensive luxuries, gets them and has to pay, which, of course, means that he has got to steal again in order to settle. Some of these pilferers cover up their defalcations cleverly by various schemes of their own invention and feel reasonably secure from exposure, yet the day of reckoning cannot be avoided.

"As a rule, it comes from some little slip —some careless act that gives them away. Their shady work comes to light. Then there's notoriety and disgrace into which the culprit drags his innocent family.

"And it all ends when he is shoved into a cell, to pay for his crime by a long sentence, during which many bitter hours are spent in useless repentance."

HAD 100 ROOM KEYS

LUCIUS E. WINCHESTER is a capable, workmanlike thief, in the opinion of detectives of the Twenty-third precinct, New York City—particularly Detective James F. Stapleton, who waited six hours in a shower bath to arrest the young man at the Hotel Pennsylvania at 4 o'clock the other morning. Winchester had relieved Mr. and Mrs. Ambrose J. Byrne of San Antonio, Texas, of nearly $3,000 worth of jewelry and clothing.

He confessed to Magistrate Bobb in Jefferson Market court that he also stole a $500 raccoon coat and a half dozen silk shirts and pajamas from rooms at the Hotel Commodore. He is in the Tombs without bail awaiting indictment and the detectives are trying to prove that he is responsible for many other hotel robberies. Winchester works with bona fide keys which he has retained from former room rentings, and more than a hundred such keys from a dozen large hotels in Manhattan were found in his room at the Pennsylvania. Winchester denies having taken two diamond rings from the Empire Hotel.

The young man says he is 21 years old. He said he lived at 314 West Ninety-fourth street with his parents, but that there were "differences" and he went to Cleveland.

Last September Winchester stayed at the Pennsylvania in room 1187. He did not relinquish his key. He registered as Ralph Wilson and was assigned room 1187. In 1187 this time were Mr. and Mrs. Byrne, the former a retired merchant on a vacation. At 7:45 o'clock the Byrnes went to dinner. They returned in an hour to find three bags they had left in their room gone, together with all of Mrs. Byrne's jewelry. In their place was an old bag. The police were notified and Stapleton assigned to the case.

The detective found one of the bags checked downstairs and traced the checker to room 1185. In this room, which was Winchester's, the two other bags were found, one of them empty. Stapleton waited for Winchester's return, having arranged for a buzz signal from the desk. At 4 in the morning Winchester returned from a theatre and cabaret party, took the one bag out of check and went to his room. He was arrested by Stapleton. In his pockets were jewels valued at $2,000. He showed the detective the fur coat and the shirts in the closet and displayed a box containing keys to rooms in the Astor, Commodore, Biltmore, McAlpin, Broadway, Claridge, Belmont, Pennsylvania and Waldorf and half a dozen other hotels.

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Full of vigor, snappy in style and incident, they all contain novel ideas, dramatic action and rousing situations. We very strongly urge you to watch for these stories and read them if you like solid enjoyment.

THE SHORT ARTICLES

as usual, will cover a variety of odd subjects. There will be a number of choice ones that cannot fail to please the most exacting reader.

In plain English, our next issue is going to be a dandy!

THE EDITOR.

Mystery Magazine

The feature stories already published in this magazine are worth reading. The following are the titles of the novelettes contained in the numbers already printed.

11 "The Voice of the Valley," by Robt. C. Brown.
12 "The Sign of the Seven Sharks," by C. F. Oursler.
13 "Under a Mask," By Crittenden Marriott.
14 "Case 4,444," by Gladys Hall.
15 "After a Million," by Police Captain Howard.
16 "Shadowing the Blue Triangle," by C. F. Oursler.
17 "The Case of Captain Fortesque," by R. Ingalls.
18 "The Bird-Headed Sphinx," by Edith S. Tupper.
19 "The Double Mystery," by Dr. Harry Enton.
20 "The Magician Detective," by C. F. Oursler.
21 "King Cobra Mystery," by George Gilbert.
22 "The Haunted Corridors," by Wm. H. Osborne.
23 "No Man's Man," by Maxwell Smith.
24 "The Trevor Puzzle," by T. C. Harbaugh.
25 "The Trail of Roses," by Edmund Condon.
26 "The Hindoo Vanishing Clue," by Pauline Bouve.
27 "Who Was Guilty?" by Beulah Poynter.
28 "The Evil Eye," by Chas. F. Oursler.
29 "The Thirteenth Door," by Edith S. Tupper.
30 "The Game of Detective Carew," by L. Jerome.
31 "Law-maker and Law-breaker," by B. Poynter
32 "The Counterfeit Heiress," by Inspector Harrigan.
33 "Tracked to China," by Chief Roger O'Brien.
34 "After the German Spies," by May Halsey Miller.
35 "The Clue in the Box," by Alexander Douglas.
36 "Trained by a French Detective," by Rene Renaud.
37 "A Drop of Ink," by Lieut. Robt. W. Warden.
38 "The Ten Doctors," by Allan Arnold Fox.
39 "The Stain on Page 61," by Chas. T. Jordan.
40 "A Masked Mystery," by Police Sergeant Kelly.
41 "The Black Soul," by Beulah Poynter.
42 "The Sanctuary," by Wm. H. Osborne.
43 "The Mystery of the Seven Shadows," by Chas. F. Oursler.
44 "The Sign of the Dragon," by C. Martin Eddy, Jr.
45 "The Magic of Detective Woo Fang," by Frank F. Whitfield.
46 "The Decoy," by William Hamilton Osborne.
47 "The House With 30 Steps," by Ralph D. Porter.
48 "When the Clock Struck 13," by Dr. Harry Enton.
49 "A Piece of Blotting Paper," by Dorothy Weber.
50 "The $200,000 Mystery," by Ethel Rosemon.
51 "The Case of Dr. Brice," by Mary R. P. Hatch.
52 "The Phantom Motor," by Laura R. Montgomery.
53 "The Blackjack," by William H. Osborne.
54 "The Whispering Head," by Chas. F. Oursler.
55 "The Inspector's Strange Case," by B. Poynter.
56 "The Secret of the Sealed Book," by E. Rosemon
57 "The Clue of Steel," by Willis Lathrop.
58 "Alias Louis Vardon," by Wm. H. Osborne.
59 "Mystery of the Old-Time Club," by C. Bingold.
60 "Caught With the Evidence," by Ethel Rosemon.
61 "A Little Gold Spider," by Cecil Burleigh.
62 "The Velvet Touch," by Julian Darrow.
63 "The Clue of the Red Lamp," by C. F. Oursler.
64 "The Scheme of Solomon Snare," by W. Osborne.
65 "Quicker Than the Eye," by Ralph Cummins.
66 "The Clue of the Dark Room," by H. Craigie.
67 "The Tongue of Osiris," by Marc Edmund Jones.
68 "Detective Wade's Big Case," by E. Rosemon.
69 "The Spirit Bell," by Charles Fulton Oursler.
70 "The House Behind the Wall," by Julian Darrow
71 "The Admiral's Spoons," by Wm. H. Osborne.
72 "The Canine Clue," by Thomas J. Lally.
73 "The Psychic Enemy," by Arthur Wm. Anderson
74 "The Wonder Girl," by Ralph Cummins.
75 "On the Wrong Trail," by Ethel Rosemon.
76 "The Spirit Witness," by Chas. F. Oursler.
77 "The Little White Room," by Edmund Jones.
78 "The Stolen Year," by Edmund Elliot.
79 "The Affair at Hollywood House," by W. Kofoed
81 "Professor Satan," by Charles Fulton Oursler.
82 "Who Killed McNally?" by Beulah Poynter.
83 "The Clue of the Whorl," by Katherine Stagg.
84 "The 'Czar' and the Ring," by Edmund Elliot.
85 "The Clue of Flame," by Jack Bechdolt.
86 "The Face in the Crowd," by Edmund Jones.
87 "The Man in Room No. 7," by Chas. F. Oursler.
88 "Four Ten-Dollar Bills," by Henry G. Howland.
89 "A Challenge to Power," by Dr. Harry Enton.
90 "The House Next-Door," by Captain Howard.
91 "The Trance Detective," by Chas. F. Oursler.
92 "Friday at Twelve," by Katherine Stagg.
93 "By the Left Hand," by Hamilton Craigie.
94 "The Melody of Death," by Jack Bechdolt.
95 "The Trick of the Great Yen How," by William Hamilton Osborne.
96 "At Moriarity's," by Fred S. Shuey.
97 "The Lost Star of the Films," by Jack Bechdolt.
98 "Counterfeit Clues," by Chas. F. Oursler.
99 "The Cross," by W. S. Ingram.
100 "The Secret Service Mystery," by Hamilton Craigie and Elliot Balestier.
101 "A Crimson Price," by Elliott Lester.
102 "The Inspector's Strange Case," by G. Jacobs.
103 "A Museum Mystery," by Jack Bechdolt.
104 "The Little Red Book," by J. Alexander Young.
105 "A Man from Siam," by Chas. F. Oursler.
106 "The Clue of the Emerald Ring," by B. Poynter.
107 "Hell's Hinges," by Hamilton Craigie.
108 "The Wolf," by Katherine Stagg.
109 "The Brass Button," by Jack Bechdolt.
110 "A Whispering Mummy," by Chas. F. Oursler.
111 "Trapping the Jewel Smugglers," by B. Poynter.
112 "The Missing Evidence," by Harold F. Podhaskl.
113 "A Clue by Radio," by Capt. Jack Static.
114 "The District Attorney's Secret," by C. Oursler.
115 "A Man From Headquarters," by H. Craigie.
116 "The Girl in the Case," by Carl Glick.
117 "A Scientific Detective," by D. G. McDonald.
118 "Number Nine Queer Street," by Jack Bechdolt.
119 "Trailed by a Private Detective," by Gottlieb Jacobs.
120 "The Mouse Trap," by Edith Sessions Tupper.
121 "A Radio Mystery," by Capt. Jack Static
122 "The Clawing Death," by Beulah Poynter.
123 "A Master of Millions," by Chas. Fulton Oursler
124 "The Secret of Room 13," by Hamilton Craigie.
125 "Six Months to Live," by George Bronson-Howard.
126 "Seals of Wax," by Jack Bechdolt.
127 "When Crooks Conspire," by Harold F. Podhaskl.
128 "The Mystery of the Blue Car," by H. Craigie.
129 "The Detective and the Law," by Frederick F. Shuey.
130 "The Hand in the Dark," by Chas. F. Oursler.
131 "The Trail of a Rogue," by George Bronson-Howard.
132 "The Woman from Nowhere," by Jack Bechdolt
133 "The Time Detective," by Frank Blighton.
134 "The Whispering-Room," by Frederick C. Davis.
135 "One Clue Missing," by Chas. F. Oursler.
136 "The Doom of the Damned," by Joe Burke.
137 "The Consuming Death," by Gilbert Hammond.
138 "Mrs. Deane's Jewels," by Beatrice S. Luisi.
139 "The Brass Voice," by Jack Bechdolt.
140 "For Shame," by Wm. Hamilton Osborne.
141 "The Triple Cross," by Hamilton Craigie.
142 "Blood Rubies," by J. Werner Phelps.
143 "I'll Win! I'll Win!" by Arthur B. Reeve and Margaret W. Reeve.
144 "Phantom Fingers," by George Bronson-Howard.
145 "On the Yellows," by Frank Blighton.
146 "The Argentine Ruby," by Beulah and Shirley Poynter.
147 "The Barrington Arms Case," by Jack Bechdolt.
148 "Hounded," by Frank Blighton.
149 "Direct Action," by Dr. Harry Enton.
150 "The Footprints On the Ceiling," by Chas. Fulton Oursler.
151 "The One Chance," by Thomas Ripley.
152 "Weapons of Hate," by Eric Howard.
153 "In Reserve," by Frank Blighton.

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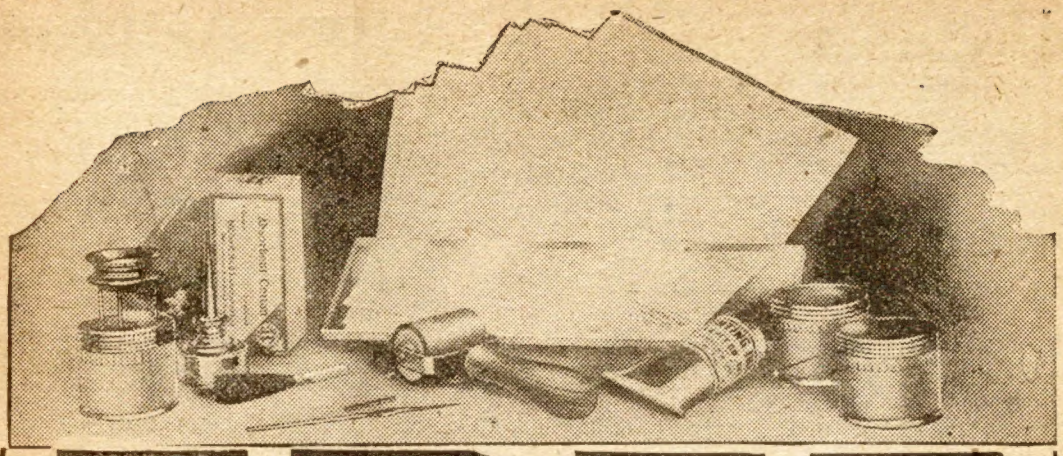

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